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Grand Prix

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N° 15 (BRAZIL) WILL BE ON SALE ON FEBRUARY 4.

GRAN PREMIO DE LA ARGENTINA

... AND WHAT ABOUT THE SPORT ?

The Argentine Grand Prix took place, and the Brazilian Grand Prix will take place. The constructors decided that fact, passing over the heads of the drivers in the case of Sao Paulo. OK, the drivers voted, amongst themselves. And they decided to run at Interlagos. But did they really have the choice ? There was a story that Ecclestone and his fellow FOCA members took each driver, alone, and explained to him that it would be much better for the drivers if they drove in Brazil. The implications were there, if unmentioned.

Mr Ecclestone himself is the organiser of the Brazilian Grand Prix, so he was rejoicing both in the role of judged and judge. Jean-Marie Balestre may never have been judged, but he's certainly no longer a judge : he's demonstrated that he bends with the wind. The Interlagos circuit has been officially deemed as dangerous, but President Balestre of FISA seems to have shrugged off the matter, giving way to FOCA's interests. Balestre even joked about the matter to a journalist questioning him on the subject : « the Brazilian problem ? What Brazilian problem ? What story have you been listening to ? » But he could lose sleep over the matter. If there 's a serious accident, he could be held responsible. The year has only just started. It's up to Balestre to change Formula One's aspect, it's up to him to try and bring the name « sport » back to motor racing.

GRAND PRIX INTERNATIONAL IS DISTRIBUTED BY SEYMOUR PRESS LTD : 334 Brixton Road-London SW9-7AG. Telex : 8812945 Seypress London. ADVERTISING : Michel Koenig, Group Prnt House, 24/32 Pottery Lane LONDON WII. Tél. : 01 727 2734/2735. Telex : 21882. CHIEF EDITOR Eric Bhat. ASSISTANT EDITOR : Bob Constanduros. CONTRIBUTOR : Maurice Hamilton. ARTISTIC DIRECTOR : Marc Tournaire. EDITORIAL SECRETARY : Régis Lacroix. ILLUSTRATIONS : Nicolas Géron. PHOTOGRAPHERS : Bernard Asset/A + p, David Winter, DPPI. Camera Canon. GRAND PRIX INTERNATIONAL is published by S.N.E.P. PUBLISHING DIRECTOR : Michel Hommell. ASSISTANT DIRECTOR : Gérard Lips. EDITORIAL ADMINISTRATION : 7, rue de Lille, 75007 PARIS; Tél. : 260.34.65. ADVERTISING : Profil 18/30, 7, rue de Lille, 75007 Paris, Tél. : 260.34.65. COMMERCIAL DIRECTOR : Philippe Méchin. PHOTO SETTING : Typo-Elysées, Compotronic. PHOTOGRAVURE : AGS DISTRIBUTED IN ITALY by : ME.PE. via Cercano 32 20141 Milano. Tél. : 02/8438141. DISTRIBUTED IN GERMANY : WE. Saarbach GmbH 5000 Köln 1. Postfach 10 1610 Follerstrasse 2. Tél. : 0221/244631. Telex : 8881067. DISTRIBUTED in France by : NMPP. Distributed in Belgium by : A.M.P. 103, rue de la Petite-Ile, Brussels. DISTRIBUTED in Argentina, Brazil, South Africa, Canada, U.S.A., Holland, Spain, Switzerland, Sweden by : G.I.H. PRINTED IN FRANCE by : SARI, Montlouis, Clermond-Ferrand, SNIL/PPR. Commission Paritaire : 61611.

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EXCLUSIVE

IN THE COCKPIT

Candy

FOR most people, this first Grand Prix of the season, the Argentina Grand Prix, has considerable importance. It's here in Argentine, during these first practice sessions, that the qualities and faults of new cars are confirmed. So some of us are filled with hope during our first few laps. The heat is incredible, I just wonder how the mechanics can work in this heat. The temperature on the track for instance, is 65 degrees Centigrade, around 150 degrees Fahrenheit. Personally, I feel fine, I've spent the winter getting fit, which is really important when you're driving flat out for an hour and a half in these conditions.
For us Europeans, the transition is really tough. It's the height of summer out here, and we've just left Europe in mid-winter. But apart from my physical well-being, I have one worry, and that's the handling of my Candy Tyrrell. Our testing at Ricard wasn't fantastic, in fact far from it. Our famous rear suspension with its electric camber change didn't give me a lot of pleasure, and now we've quietly abandoned the idea. To tell you the truth, I'm not expecting great things from the Candy Tyrrell. The car has been scarcely modified since last year. I'm really looking forward to our new 010 which should be ready for the South African Grand Prix if all goes well.
Meanwhile, we have to make do with the 009, which is really a little out of date but which could pick up some points during the difficult Grands Prix in Argentina and Brazil, especially with some luck and a few retirements. Those are slim possibilities but it's still tremendous to be back racing again, and I still feel a thrill when I press the starter button and the Cosworth screams into life.
Well, this first Grand Prix has certainly caused one shock. It's not been caused by one of the participants, nor some technical innovation, but by the track itself. This surface seems to have a remarkable tendency to melt. Of course, that makes it very hard to drive on, because the grip is absolutely zero. I've had my fair share of things in Formula One, dangerous cars, dangerous circuits (and some to come), the unbelievable sight of slicks in the rain, and now here's a circuit that melts ! As you can imagine, this has upset practice, and the race too. The track was at its best during the first session of practice and just got worse from then on. It was impossible to improve during the second part of practice, except for some of the lucky or foolhardy drivers. It was worse during the race for millions of television viewers were able to watch a ridiculous spectacle whereby super-powerful Formula One cars tip-toed round unable to put their power down.
As for my race, there's virtually no point in talking about it. I tried really hard in practice to get a place at the tail end of the grid, and then did one lap in the race. A completely negative weekend as far as I was concerned. However, there was some consolation for the team, because my new teammate Derek Daly, who started even further back then I did, benefited from all the retirements in the heat, and finished fourth. He only just missed third place, because Rosberg ran out of petrol just in sight of the line. Rosberg's car stuttered across the line, just in front of Derek, which was lucky for the Fittipaldi driver. The Irishman had had the sort of race I'd hoped for, profiting from retirements and picking up some points. Perhaps it will be my turn in Brazil.
However, I shall not be very happy to race in Brazil. It's a circuit I love, one where I've really enjoyed racing, but now it's extremely dangerous. It's really bumpy on the track, and off it, and it simply isn't suitable for modern Formula One cars. Their cornering speed is so high now that it's really dangerous to race on such a track.

We had a drivers meeting in Argentina at the end of which we voted as to whether we'd race there or not. The experienced drivers, and I count myself as one of them, refused. We were 13 out of 26. The other 13 decided to race there, to protect their commercial interests. It has to be said, and it's quite scandalous, that Formula One is controlled these days by the constructors headed by Bernie Ecclestone. And their motivation is purely and simply money. They want to rule everything, control everything, including the drivers, and organise at the circuits. The trouble is that when they organise, they forget about safety. They seem to forget that if because of their mistake there's a bad accident at Interlagos, the public reaction will be really unfavourable, and sponsors, not wishing to be associated with death, will pull out. Those are short term views. To make money is fine, but to make a little less for longer is better. But the constructors don't seem to understand that fact. When the sponsors pull out, how are they going to run their ridiculously expensive wing cars ?
So what's to be done ? We could set up a powerful syndicate in the true sense of the word, but the drivers are controlled by the constructors and we don't have room to manœuvre. No, there's another solution. The FISA must fulfil its role and that role is to control Formula One, to give equal representation to both constructors and drivers. It's not like that currently. It's FOCA who controls things, and if FISA even deign to show their teeth, things just reach stalemate. Anyway, if there's a bad accident in Brazil, it will be FOCA who carry the can, but also Balestre, the president of FISA, who has been incapable of making any sort of ruling on safety. Balestre has had a hard time. He took over an organisation and responsibility that had deteriorated, and it would have been hard to reverse the trend. It was during the term of the two previous presidents, Metternich and Ugeux that things got worse. Their lack of action and sitting on the fence caused first the GPDA and then FOCA to be born. But that must be changed as quickly as possible.

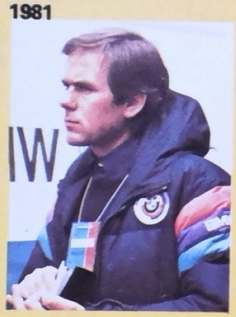
If FISA is to become a powerful, autonomous, independent federation, then FOCA will become obsolete. But they must get out of this current situation, that's to say, at the mercy of the constructors, and in conflict with FOCA. It's sterile, useless and dangerous.

We need a strong governing body, one that makes decisions and is independent. It's important for the whole of world motor sport.

So either we adopt some new principles, or Formula One degenerates into a sort of It's a Knock-Out as tennis has in the United States, or we allow everything to be ruled by money. The only difference is that It's a Knock-Out doesn't put lives at risk, whereas Formula One does.

The paddock in Buenos Aires

TALBOT-NEERPASCH : OBJECTIVE 1981



Perhaps the biggest talking point on the Formula One front at Buenos Aires was the announcement that Talbot are to enter Formula One in 1981, with Jochen Neerpasch as sporting director.

Talbot entering Formula One has been rumoured for quite some time. The new PSA subsidiary, formerly Simca and then Chrysler, are in need of establishing their nearly-new name of Talbot, and so they decided to follow in the footsteps of Renault and Alfa Romeo by chosing the world of Formula One to promote their products and give them a sporting image.

What was surprising, especially for the chauvinistic French, was that the whole organisation and execution of the programme should be handed to a German, Jochen Neerpasch. Surely there was a Frenchman who could do the job, there are enough of them in Formula One. But Talbot were looking for a man with experience in organisation and amenagement in competition as a whole. Neerpasch has been with BMW as their sporting director for eight years, following a career with Ford, and as such, he proved to be the most suitable candidate. For various reasons, there were slight drawbacks to the various Frenchmen who were considered.

Furthermore, it's quite obvious that Neerpasch will benefit Talbot as much as Talbot will benefit Neerpasch. Not surprisingly, the former German driver is very keen on Formula One, which is, after all, the peak and most prestigious, type of motor racing. Neerpasch in fact went some way towards Formula One while at BMW by developing a 1500cc four cylinder, 16 valve, turbocharged engine for the McLaren team. However, the Munich firm called a halt to the idea, much to Neerpasch's disappointment, for he could envisage a McLaren-BMW TC driven by Niki Lauda. On the other hand, Talbot has a problem in that they had to start their programme from zero, but didn't want to waste a lot of time. They couldn't come to agreement with Matra (even though they belonged to the same group). Meanwhile, the aborted BMW project gave the Talbot directors some ideas. Se between them, with the united aim of Formula One, Neerpasch joins forces with the French firm.

Jochen Neerpasch made the following comment to our German editor Manfred Klutman on the subject : ***« I'm taking to Talbot my experience and know-how of the turbocharged engine gained at BMW. OUR Formula One car will use a 1500cc turbocharged engine manufactured by Talbot. To clarify matters, there will be no collaboration between Talbot and BMW ».*** Some of our colleagues reckon that BMW's engine man Paul Rosche will help out on the Talbot project, but the French firm have denied this.

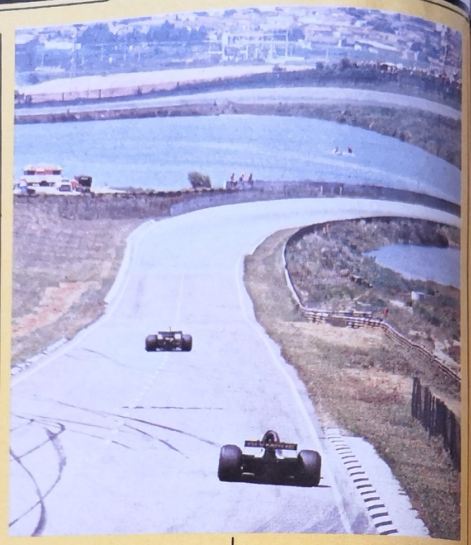
Neerpasch's objective is to manufacture and develop a Formula One Talbot for the 1981 Grand Prix season, ***« providing we don't have too many problems »,*** as Neerpasch commented to our correspondent.

No doubt we'll have more details as to Neerpasch's team at Talbot as engineers and technicians are hired. Perhaps an initial outline and programme of development will be available during February.

DRIVERS IN BRAZILIAN REVOLT

The fire has been smouldering for some weeks now. Originally the Brazilian Grand Prix was to have taken place at Jacarepagua, near Rio, but it has since been transferred to Interlagos, near Sao Paulo. However, the drivers say that the latters' track surface is deplorable. It seems that the surface is very bumpy, and consequently very dangerous for wing-cars cornering at high speeds. The situation was considered very bad last year, and the official report to the FISA stated that the track had to be resurfaced before the Grand Prix took place there again. Theoretically, that should have been in 1981, as this year's Grand Prix should have been at Rio. But when Rio stated that they couldn't hold the GP, it went back to Interlagos, where, incidently, Bernie Ecclestone is in charge of the organisation. But the resurfacing work hasn't been carried out.

Jody Scheckter, as president of the GPDA has sent frequent letters and telex messages on the subject to the president of FISA, Jean-Marie Balestre, theoretically the man who should make the final decision. Copies of the letters and telexes were available for inspection during a GPDA press conference in Argentina. But they had no effect. The president remained silent and shirked his duty, prefering to shelter behind the safety committee's granting of a track licence on December 1, 1979, despite the unfavourable reaction to the circuit in February of 1979.



By not intervening, Balestre was seen to be siding with Ecclestone. Meanwhile the latter had protected his investment in the Grand Prix by asking his FOCA members to put pressure on their drivers to ensure the Grand Prix should not be threatened by a boycott.

So in its extreme, the situation looked like this. The drivers didn't want to race at Interlagos but feared that they would break their contracts with their employers. The organiser didn't want to have anything to do with the drivers' safety but wanted the race to go ahead, and the ultimate judge in the matter didn't want to judge.

Scheckter, who was taking his role of GPDA president very much to heart, called his members together on the Thursday preceding the Grand Prix in Argentine. Only Reutemann and Jones were absent. At the end of their discussions, they voted as to whether they would or would not race at Interlagos. The answer was « yes » but by a narrow majority. So the GPDA won't be going on strike in Brazil. It seems that the team managers' little lectures to their drivers did some good. Gilles Villeneuve, later analysed the situation thus : ***« we can't go on strike. FISA has granted sixty Formule One licences. The constructors want the Brazilian Grand Prix to go ahead and they would take new drivers if they had to. 26 newcomers starting a race, that would be really weird. In order not to break their contracts, the constructors would have made themselves look really silly, and that could have dramatic consequences on Formula One as a whole ».***

Scheckter and his allies were beaten by the majority, but the current World Champion delivered a solemn warning at the following press conference : ***« we're racing at Interlagos because of our sporting contracts to do so, but we take no responsibility for any subsequent events which our racing may cause ».*** But Jody implied that the men who should be held responsible for any serious incident were Balestre and Ecclestone.

The GPDA may have had to bow to the FOCA, but nevertheless, it seems that the drivers are becoming increasingly aware of the steps they have to take to tame the demands made of them by the ever more powerful constructors. In any case, the younger drivers realise that their seniors are in favour of solidarity amongst the drivers as a whole, and are not looking after their personal interests.

The final paragraph of the letter sent by the GPDA to the FISA president has a certain poignancy : ***« We don't think we are wrong if we ask you to consider that our lives are more important than any financial or commercial issue ».*** It's sad that perhaps Jean-Marie Balestre can't read English.

QUALIFYING TYRES TO BE BANNED ?

One week before the Argentine Grand Prix, Goodyear announced that they would no longer be making qualifying tyres, and they wouldn't be supplying them in Argentina, nor at any subsequent Grands Prix. Their reasons were economic. One wonders if Goodyear aren't trying to force Michelin's hand, so that qualifying tyres are banned in Formula One. Goodyear have been trying to get FISA to ban them for quite some time, but no decision has been taken. Qualifying tyres are a very costly part of Formula One, yet they have very little bearing on actual racing, and they provide little technical feedback of any use.

But as yet, there is no rule banning the tyres. And while Goodyear are no longer supplying tyres for qualifying, Michelin are still providing them. ***« We're going to use whatever tyres we want to. If Goodyear don't want to provide qualifiers, that's their business, »*** said Pierre Dupasquier. ***« But I must say that as a company we're thoroughly in favour of any idea that will be constructive and more economic ».*** Goodyear's idea is that whatever tyre is used to get the quickest time in practice should be used for the race. In order to police this, another 30 people would be needed to ensure that the rules were adhered to. ***« It's not impossible »,*** said Goodyear's Paul Lauritzen. ***« I reckon it's the best idea so far ».*** Meanwhile, Goodyear are currently supplying three different types of tyre : A, B, C, of which A is the hardest and C the softest.

FERRARI CONTINUE WITH TURBO DEVELOPMENT

The Ferrari team are still working hard on their turbocharged engine. When the 312 T5 was announced at Fiorano, an outline of their programme was also revealed. Testing is to take place on two types of engine of eight and siw cylinders. Gilles Villeneuve hopes to have this car shortly after mid-season, but it will only be available if it has shown to be competitive. The aerodynamics of this car will no doubt be completely different to those of the T5.

SHADOW : KENNEDY AND JOHANSSON FOR STARTERS

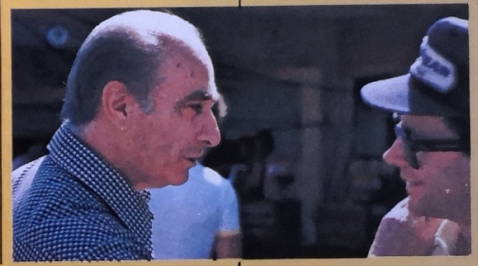
The Shadow drivers in Argentine weren't that well knon they went out to start practice. They were Irishman David Kennedy and Sweden's Stefan Johansson. Both were making their Grand Prix debuts. Kennedy has signed for most of the Grands Prix thanks to his sponsors Interlekt, but Johansson may not drive again. Don Nichols had only asked him to drive for the one Grand Prix, and Stefan didn't know whether he would be driving at Interlagos or not.

Of the two, Kennedy is the more experienced. This red-headed, blue-eyed Irishman took part in the British Aurora series last year in a Wolf-WR4 and 5, winning four races. The two previous years had seen him driving in Formula Three. Some years previously, David and his good friend Tyrrell driver Derek Daly went to Australia to work in the mines in order to buy their first racing cars.

Johansson is straight out of Formula Three, and has only once raced a more powerful car. That was at Donington for a Formula Two race last year. Our Scandinavian colleagues think a lot of their man, and hope that he'll get a permanent Formula One drive.

FANGIO AND CROMBAC : REUNION

Our picture shows two men who started in motor racing on the same day, one as a journalist, the other as a Grand Prix racing driver. Jaby Crombac is now editor of Sport Auto, while the man who began his Formula One career that day is none other than the famous Juan Manuel Fangio. Both have been firm friends since their Grand Prix debuts, and of course, the Argentine went on to win the World Championship five times, and has 24 Grand Prix victories to his credit.



THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO KETTERS

Our colleague Mike Kettlewell has just published a book entitled « The Motor Racing Directory » which we believe should have a place on the bookshelves of every motor racing enthusiast. Not only is the make-up of motor sport in England covered extensively, but there's a very detailed list of Formula One results since the inception of the World Championship, plus a historic record of the composition of all the Grand Prix teams. Never has the amateur statistician been so well served. It sells for L7.95 in England, and can be obtained for L9 post free from the following address : The Mill House, Station Road, Eastville, Boston, Lincolnshire PE22 8LS, England.

FRANK HAS ONE FOOT ON THE LADDER

When Frank Williams relaunched his Formula One team in 1978, he already had a plan for the next few years. He would run one car in 1978, two cars in 1979 to gain experience with the larger team, and then have a real go for the World Championship in 1980. So far, everything has gone excellently according to plan. Jones has already won the Argentine Grand Prix. But as Frank himself says, there are still fifteen opportunities to lose.

Carlos Reutemann, the new recruit : according to Frank Williams, he's one of the four or five best drivers in the World.

A decisive season for the Williams team started in Argentine. The hardest thing will be to stay on top.

by Eric BHAT

ALAN Jones was still the man to beat. For everyone, the memory of his head and shoulders domination of the second half of the 1979 was still painfully clear. He won four races, Germany, Austria, Holland and Canada, and lost two more that seemed in the bag for him, the British and Watkins Glen. Furthermore, Alan had set the fastest times during the traditional off-season test sessions at Circuit Paul Ricard, which always give a pointer to the following season.

So Alan Jones was very much the favourite even before the first practice session at the Almirante Brown circuit in Buenos Aires. His chances were strengthened by the fact that history dictates that Michelin tyres don't work well on its surface. The Goodyear runners would therefore be at an advantage over Ferrari and Renault.

Strangely enough, the Circuit Paul Ricard test sessions were misleading for Frank Williams and design chief Patrick Head, even though they were so encouraging. The Williams that arrived in Argentina were similar in specification to that tested at Ricard in December. They consisted of the FW 07 with aerodynamic modifications : new side pods and interiors, plus an enclosed gearbox section with the bodywork making a boat-shape behind the gearbox. However, the spare car hadn't been modified at all, it was just the same as the 1979 cars.

Early practice sessions in Argentina revealed that the new aerodynamic configuration did not produce the results expected. In fact the spare turned out to be better.

"We've made a stupid tactical error" admitted Frank Williams. *"Patrick Head and I thought that our old car would only be on the third or fourth row of the grid here in Buenos Aires, because our rival teams would have made considerable progress. For that reason, we reckoned that we'd have to have a car that was twox seconds a lap quicker in order to win, which is why we worked hard to*

develop the car during the winter. But now it turns out that here in Argentina, the car is slower. Our development was in the right direction, we've got a lot more downforce, but the car isn't fast enough in a straight line. Alan got pole position in the spare car. That's why I say we committed a tactical error. While the old car was still competitive, we tried to make a new car which meant a lot of work for the mechanics and jeopardised our preparation. I blame myself for that".

SO Alan Jones took pole position in the spare, and no one was able to go quicker. And the Australian driver decided to start in that car too. "Our modified version won't be used at Interlagos either", explained Frank. "We've got to develop it further. We know which direction we have to go in, and we won't be using that car for the next two months at least".

Alan Jones was three tenths of a second quicker than Jacques Laffite, his nearest rival. "The gap could have been greater still, said Alan. I still had a lot left under my right foot".

Apart from going off the track because of the poor surface, Carlos Reutemann had engine trouble. He broke one engine on the Thursday, and did the same thing the next day. On the second occasion, a short circuit caused a small fire.

It was the engine again that caused Reutemann's retirement during the race, but this time it was because he'd gone off the track and the radiators became blocked by grass which then caused overheating. The Argentine driver seemed destined for a good race, for despite his low grid position, he'd quickly caught up the Laffite-Piquet duo. Once Carlos had parked the car in the escape road at the first hairpin, he was so disappointed that he remained motionless in it for a whole five minutes. And even when he finally got out of the car, he couldn't tear himself away from gazing at the car, wondering what might have been...

ALAN Jones also went off the track on a couple of occasions. On one excursion, he picked up a plastic bag in one of the radiators which caused the car to overheat. Alan stopped in the pits to have the bag removed. « I thought then that we'd lost the race », said Frank Williams. « I wasn't certain that the plastic bag was the sole cause of the overheating, and I was afraid that the mechanics hadn't fully resolved the temperature problem ».

Jones restarted in determined fashion, catching and overtaking Villeneuve, Piquet and Laffite, and once Villeneuve and Laffite had retired, he led Piquet by 24 ». Williams hung out the following signal to his driver : +24, REV, TEMP. That meant : "You've got 24" lead, don't use so many revs so that the engine can cool".

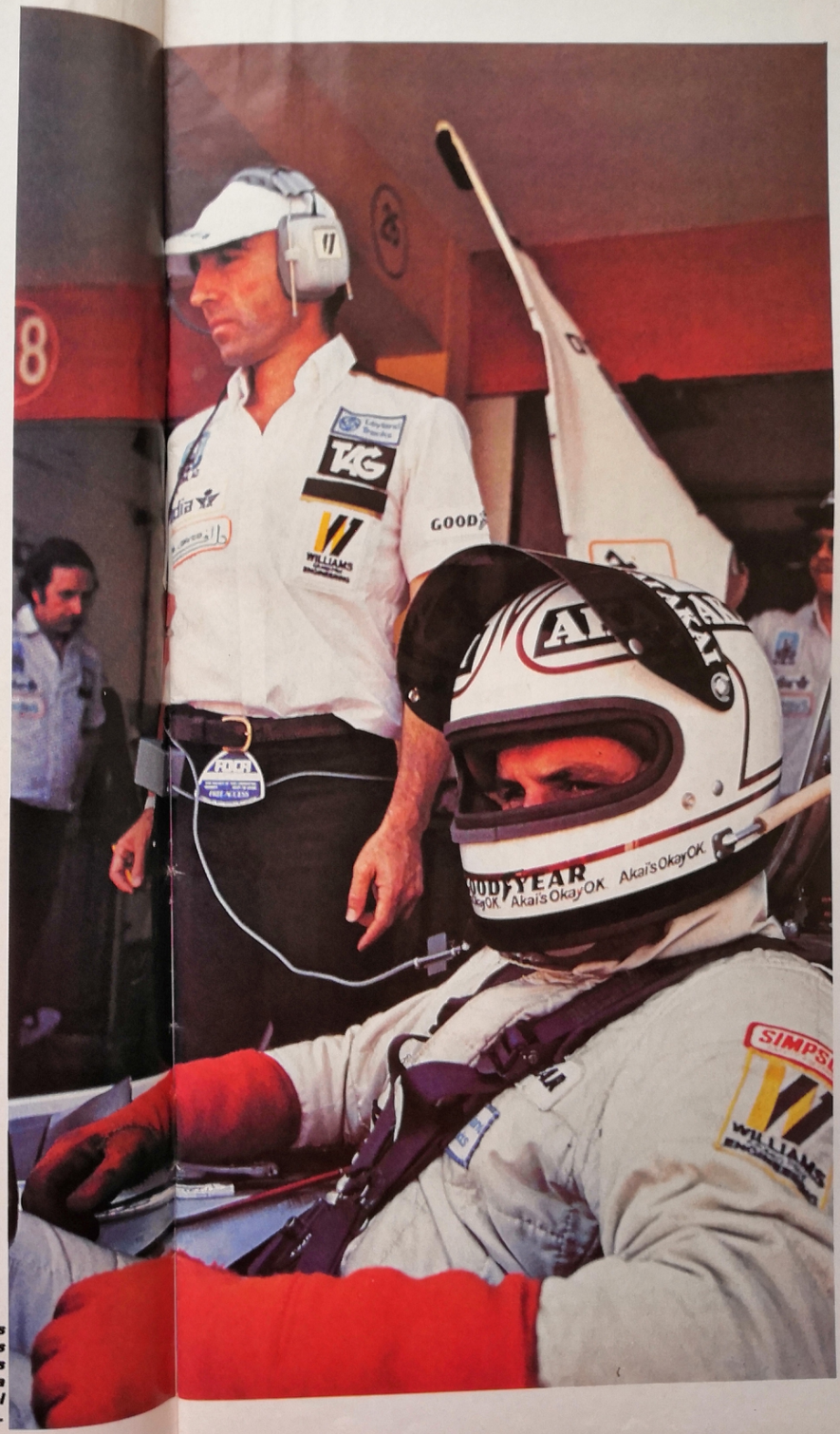
Alan's lead disappeared like snow in the sun, but he was controlling the pace, even though it probably made Nelson Piquet wonder whether Jones was in trouble. "I didn't just slow by 200 rvs," explained Jones to Williams afterwards, "I dropped a whole 2000 revs". The gap between first and second dropped to 3"5, and then rose again. Jones was greeted by the first chequered flag of the season, and the Union Jack waved by his mechanics as he swept passed the pits for the final time.

"That was a strange race", concluded Williams. "Two spins, one pit stop, four slow laps to cool the engine, and still a win at the end of it. I think we had a lot of luck, we were so close to disaster. We came within a hair's breadth of losing both cars, and that would have been a bloody disaster".

The English team couldn't have started the season better off. "Yes we could", corrected Franck Williams. "Ligier did last year. Now things are going to get tough. History shows that to win in Argentina makes things hard, because you have to maintain that standard throughout the season. But it seems that at least Alan has the advantage over the others".

SO Williams decisive season has just begun. For the first time in his career, he has the chance of winning the World Championship. He considers that he still has a handicap to overcome : "we're still not as well organised as Ferrari. We've still got to work hard in order to perfect our organisation and not make the kind of error that we've justmade". But at a glance, Frank's got a lot going for him : two top class drivers, a talented chief engineer in Patrick Head, from April he'll have his own wind-tunnel, Arab money, and support from Leyland. "Their sponsorship is interesting, explains Frank. "Furthermore, they have their own private test circuit only 200 miles form our factory. It's very good politics to have a big brother like Leyland behind you, especially if you can still maintain total autonomy". Frank's Saudi sponsors have made an exception in accepting the new company, because Albilad, another of Frank's sponsors, are importing Leyland busses and trucks to Saudi Arabia. « And of course, as you know, I'm very English », adds a smiling Frank.

Frank reckons that his season will cost around 2,5 million pounds, of which nearly nine hundred thousand pounds goes on running the second car. "That's why I really wanted a top number two". Racing at the top is expensive. "And at the end of the year, there'll be nothing left for me, except the names of my drivers written in the results..." □



The Williams-Jones partnership has already proved its worth. It's just a matter of final consecration.

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CARLOS REUTEMANN

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WHAT IS THE OVER-RIDING MEMORY OF YOUR TIME WITH LOTUS ? IT DOESN'T SEEM TO BEEN A VERY HAPPY PERIOD.

The 1979 season was a very difficult one for the Lotus team. I think they relaxed a little too much after their winning season in 1978. The Lotus 80 also caused confusion around mid-season. It was a disaster. Furthermore, I had a lot of trouble with Mario Andretti. He was very aggressive about me in an interview published in Germany. I think that caused my break-up with the Lotus.

HOW CAN ONE EXPLAIN MARIO'S AGGRESSIVENESS ? WHAT WAS IT CAUSED BY ?

It's hard to say. One moment Mario said that he never said these things to the press. But the next moment, I was able to check personally with the magazine in question, who gave me the recorded cassettes of the interview. And Mario said quite a lot about me. He blamed me partially for the Lotus

Renault and Ferrari offered me a drive for 1980. To be honest, the most interesting offer came from Arrows.

BUT WHY DIDN'T YOU ACCEPT IT ?

That's hard to say. I chose Williams because I've known Frank for a very long time. He offered me a good deal with the team.

THE PROBLEM WAS THAT YOUR CONTRACT BOUND YOU TO LOTUS FOR ANOTHER SEASON.

Chapman claimed financial compensation from me. I paid it on December 12. And it was I who paid the bill. Frank paid ten per cent of it.

YOU SPOKE OF A DEAL WITH THE WILLIAMS TEAM, BUT YOU HAVE A CONTRACT TO BE NUMBER TWO DRIVER. IS THAT NOT A PROBLEM ?

In actual fact my contract stipulates that Alan Jones has priority over me. If the garage burns down one night and there's only one car left, Alan will have it. If Alan is leading a race in front of me, I'm not allowed to try and get by him. If I'm leading and he's less than five seconds behind me, I have to drop back and let him lead. Having said that, I think it's only right that Alan has priority. He's been with Williams for a long time, he deserves the best service. But Frank has assured me that we will have silimar equipment throughout the season.

WHAT ARE YOU HOPING FOR THIS SEASON ?

I hope that Williams win the World Championship. I'm not necessarily talking about me winning the World Championship, I'm talking about the Williams team. If Alan wins the World Championship, I will have been very happy to have driven for the World Championship-winning team.

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GOODYEAR
AMES
GITA

UNIPART

80 disaster, saying that I didn't want to help with testing. That's ridiculous. I really tried my hardest for Lotus in 1979. But this dispute with Mario changed everything. It was time to finish with Lotus.

DID YOU EVER BELIEVE IN THE LOTUS 80 ? AT JARAMA, JUST AFTER IT'S ANNOUNCEMENT, IT SEEMED COMPETITIVE.

To be honest, I drove the 80 as hard as possible to see how competitive it was. I did one test at Donington, and another at Silverstone, where I was a second and a half faster than Mario. I drove the car at 100 per cent. But on the same day the 80 was slower than the 79. When a car is good, I believe in it. When it isn't, I don't believe in it.

YOU COULD HAVE STAYED WITH LOTUS AS NUMBER ONE DRIVER, AND MARIO WOULD HAVE LEFT. WHY DIDN'T YOU ACCEPT THOSE TERMS ?

I was offered the number one drive and could chose the number two driver too. I knew that Chapman would recover in 1980. But from July to November, my life was so difficult at Lotus that I didn't want to take the risk and possibly come up against the same problems. When I signed for Lotus at the start of 1979, I was told that I could have personal sponsors. So I entered into agreement with sponsors from Argentina. Then it was all changed, and I had a lot of problems. That's another of my Lotus grievances.

DID YOU NOT GET ON WITH CHAPMAN ?

I think that Chapman is a winner, certainly, and he's a real Formula One innovator. But I didn't really talk to Chapman a lot in 1979, because he was working with Mario. However, he was very kind to me in saying : « you are probably one of the best drivers that has ever driven for me. I want to help you win the World Championship, I think you're World Champion potential. » But four months of difficulty discouraged me from accepting his offer.

IS IT TRUE THAT YOU WOULD PREFERRED TO HAVE DONE A SEASON IN USAC RATHER THAN DRIVER FOR LOTUS AGAIN ? THAT'S HOW RUMOUR HAS IT.

After Mario said his bit in the press, my phone never stopped ringing. Everyone apart from

DON'T YOU FEEL IT'S A PROBLEM CHANGING TEAMS EACH YEAR ? SOME DRIVERS SAY THAT THEY DON'T REALLY SETTLE DOWN UNTIL THEIR SECOND YEAR WITH A TEAM.

Yes, that's true. But if I had stayed with a team when in fact I left it, I might not neccessarily have felt very relaxed. I left Brabham when I felt the moment had come for me to leave. The same applies to my leaving Ferrari and Lotus. At that stage I no longer wanted to remain with those teams. It just happens that way. I hope to stay with Frank for three or four years.

YOU'RE NOT THINKING OF RETIRING ?

No.

THE SEASON IS ONLY ABOUT TO START, BUT CAN YOU COMPARE THE WILLIAMS AND LOTUS TEAMS EVEN AT THIS STAGE OF THE SEASON ?

Our team is very good, I'm very pleased with it. I have no complaints to make about it. But to compare it with Lotus is hard. I'm behind the two Lotus on the grid for the Argentine. Grand Prix (Carlos was interviewed on the evening before the race), so I don't think I'm really in a position to say much.

DO YOU THINK IT'S GOING TO BE EASIER FOR YOU TO MIX IN WITH THE WILLIAMS TEAM THIS YEAR, IN COMPARISON TO LOTUS LAST YEAR. DO YOU THINK YOU'RE GOING TO BE BETTER RECEIVED ?

Yes, the circumstances seem better because Frank asked me to join his team very early on in 1979. It wasn't a glib proposition, he was serious. So having said that let me say that it's not easy to integrate into a competitive team. I had a bad time in 1979 with Lotus, I hope things will go better in 1980.

WHAT DO YOU THINK OF YOUR NEW TEAMMATE ALAN JONES ?

He's very quick. He's a potential 1980 World Champion. He's probably the most aggressive and fastest driver today, January 12, 1980.

AND DO YOU ALSO CONSIDER YOURSELF AS WORLD CHAMPION MATERIAL ?

Yes. □

THE FILM OF THE RACE

When Alan Jones began to take a second a lap off his pursuers during the early laps, it looked as though the race for the lead would be non-existent. But then the track started to break up, and the race began to look different. There was a superb four-way battle : Laffite, Piquet, Villeneuve and Jones, the latter having stopped at the pits. Unfortunately, the battle didn't last longer than ten laps. The two survivors, Jones and Piquet, went on to first and second.

1 →

1 - Practice took place on a track that was already in very poor condition and as slippery as ice. On the Saturday, Piquet went off the road and had to qualify in his space car.

2 →

2 - The year's first Grand Prix start has just been given. Jones has already grabbed the lead in front of Laffite, Pironi, Piquet, Andretti and Villeneuve.

3 →

3 - They're still on their first lap. « I was a little too optimistic under braking », said Villeneuve. De Angelis goes off into the grass as a result of this mix-up...

4 →

4 - ... and then tries to get back onto the track again. Patrese, following closely, has to take to the escape road.

5 →

5 - Pironi follows Laffite closely on the second lap. Didier got by his teammate a little further on, but his engine blew a couple of corners after that.

6 →

6 - Rosberg is in seventh place on the third lap, in front of Villeneuve who has already regained four places, and Alain Prost.

7 →

7 - Jochen Mass did well at the start of the race, but then spun on the seventh lap, leaving Scheckter in fifth place.

Jones already had a 16 second lead by the tenth lap

THE big problem, during practice, was the state of the track. The two hour-long qualifying sessions started in their own characteristic way. There was a big rush to get out onto the track during the first fifteen minutes, while the track was still quite useable, and then the track's grip deteriorated so that it was more like a skating rink. The rest of the session would then become a feast of spinning and straight-ons into the grass, and the times scarcely improved.

Alan Jones put himself on pole position in front of the Laffite and Pironi Ligiers during the first session. The next day, none of them could improve at all on a track that was again deteriorating. At the front of the field, only Piquet, De Angelis and Villeneuve were able to improve by a few tenths. The Lotus 81s were agreeably surprising, as was Patrese who was seventh fastest. There were seven different types of car in the first ten on the grid : Williams, Ligier, Brabham, Lotus, Arrows, Ferrari and Renault. It looked as if it would be a hard-fought race. The Williams cars had a slight advanatage, but it was hard to predict who their main challengers would be.

However, the Argentine Grand Prix slipped into a rather monotonous rhythm during the early laps, certainly in terms of the race for the lead, Alan Jones pulled away and it seemed no one could stop him. By the tenth lap, he had a 16 second lead over his immediate pursuers : Laffite, Piquet and Reutemann. It had been Piquet in second first of all, but Laffite got by on the eighth lap. They were followed closely by Carlos Reutemann. The Argentine started very well. He was fifth on the first lap, overtook Mario Andretti on the second and then began to haul in the Piquet-Laffite duo. Behind the four leaders came the Ferraris of Villeneuve and Scheckter on the tenth lap. The French-Canadian's climb through the field was superb : he was twelfth on the first lap after going off at the chicane, but then overtook Regazzoni, Prost, Andretti, Rosberg and Scheckter. He'd benefitted from Andretti's engine trouble and Mass going off the track on the seventh lap while lying fifth.

The early stages were disastrous for quite a few drivers. By the tenth lap, six cars were already missing : Jean-Pierre Jarier returned to the pits at the end of the first lap with broken drive-shafts. Watson didn't last longer than the sixth lap for the Frenchman's Tyrrell had hit from behind and all the gearbox oil was lost. On the fourth lap, the Renaults has retired, and Pironi's engine blew on the second lap.

Meanwhile, the track was getting worse, which meant the remaining drivers had to be almost superhuman to keep their cars on the track. Jones's lead reached 20"8 on the twelfth lap, and then began to shrink again. On the 17 th lap, the Wil-

→

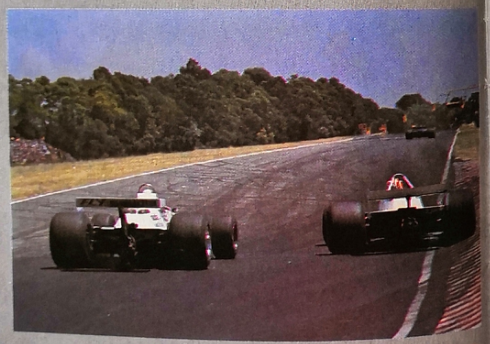
8 - Behind Jones, the following group are battling hard : Piquet, Laffite and Reutemann are really close together on the eighth lap...

9 - ... but two laps later, Reutemann goes off the track and has to pit to have the grass removed from his radiators. But the damage is already done and he retires with a broken engine on the 12th lap.

10 - Even Jones fails to escape danger : he goes off the track on the 15th lap, a plastic bag sticks to the radiator and the Williams has to pit to have it removed.

11 - Jones restarts determinedly in fourth place. He catches Villeneuve on the 23rd lap. The two of them lap Depailler.

12 - Villeneuve hasn't been able to hold off Jones, who now catches Piquet...



13 - ... and quickly goes into the attack. Already he has his sights on Laffite who is currently in the lead.

14 - Jones has overtaken Laffite whose engine has lost its edge. On the 30th lap, the Williams leads, and the Ligier retires.

15 - Jones, Piquet, Rosberg : the first trio of the year. Those who have survived have reaped the rewards.

Uncertainty to the end thanks to a track as slippery as ice.

liams stopped in the pits. Alan had gone straight on into the grass two laps earlier, and a plastic bag had become lodged in his oil radiator. Seeing his engine temperature rise dangerously, Alan stopped to have the bag quickly removed by the Williams mechanics. By the time he'd got back onto the track, Laffite, Piquet and Villeneuve (who had pulled away from Scheckter whose engine was smoking) had all gone passed. The Williams hopes weren't high : Carlos Reutmann had stopped on the twelfth lap with a damaged engine after an excursion into the grass.

But then the race regained interest. Alan Jones began to catch up the first three. In three laps he'd latched onto the rear wheels of Villeneuve's Ferrari who in turn was closely following Piquet. Jones passed Villeneuve on the 24 th lap, and then took Piquet a lap later. Then the Williams began to draw in Laffite, whose engine had been losing power for four laps. The Ligier's moments of glory didn't last much longer. On the 30 th lap, Jones took back the lead, while Laffite went out for good a lap later, let down by his engine.

Villeneuve found himself in second place, having taken Piquet on the 26 th lap. Fourth was Scheckter, quite some way behind, in front of Rosberg, Daly, Giacomelli, Prost, Depailler, Regazzoni and Zunino. Patrese had gone straight on at the chicane on the first lap, but had come back well up into sixth place before the engine failed on the 28 th lap. Prior to that, the exhaust had lost him power for a few laps. Prost also lost a few places starting from the sixth lap when his skirts became jammed following a trip into the grass. Until that moment, he'd been leading Rosberg.

For the five laps from the 32 nd to the 36th laps, the gap between Jones and Villeneuve remained stable at 4''. But the Ferrari left the track on the 37 th lap with broken front suspension. Piquet inherited second place, 22'' behind Jones. But then Jones's lead began to shrink rapidly. Jones had obviously lifted off, worried by his engine's temperature. When Piquet was only three seconds behind, Jones began to attack again, and this time the Brabham completely lost contact with the Williams, which drew away to a lonely win, However, there was uncertainty right to the end. The track was very slippery, and Jones had already had three worrying moments. There was no reason why he shouldn't have another, He wasn't safe until he'd crossed that finishing line. Piquet finished second, taking his first good result, in front of another very happy driver : Keke Rosberg, who inherited Jody Scheckter's place on the podium when the latter's engine blew on the 45th lap. The other survivors in the points were Daly, Giacomelli and Prost, all of whom inscribed their names on the results of a World Championship race for the first time. Zunino, final runner, finished seventh. □

Buenos Aires statistics

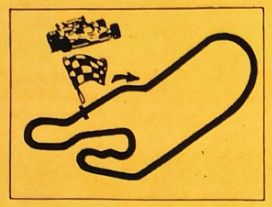
ARGENTINE GRAND PRIX

Date : January 13, 1980
Circuit length : 3.708 miles
Race distance : 53 laps, 196.55 miles
Conditions : Sunny and very hot
Attendance : 100,000 spectators

THE RECORD

(last five races)

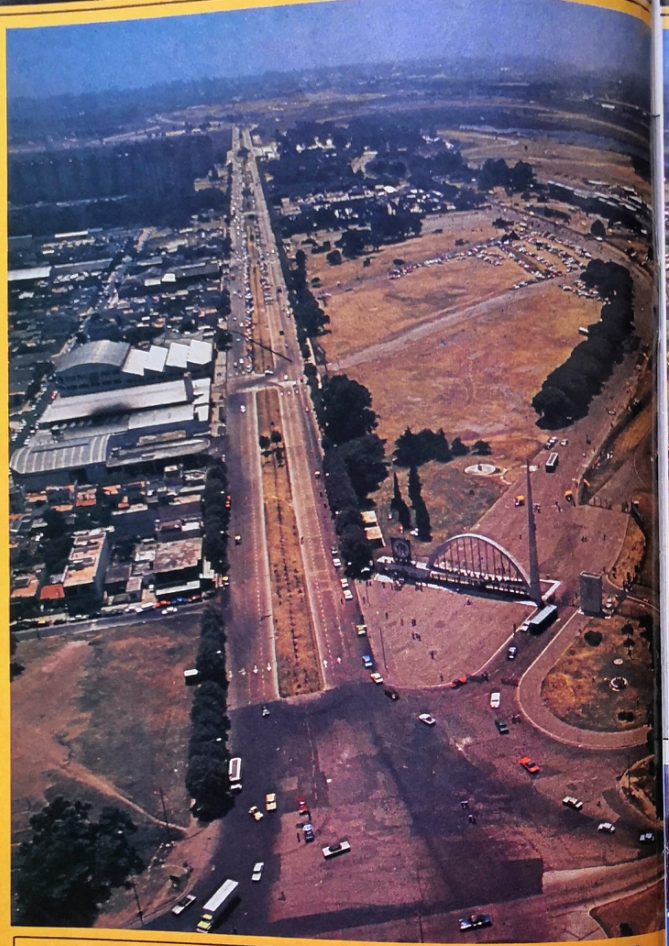
1974 : Hulme (Mc Laren M 23)
1975 : Fittipaldi (Mc Laren M 23)
1977 : Scheckter (Wolf WR 1)
1978 : Andretti (Lotus 78)
1979 : Laffite (Ligier JS 11)



STARTING GRID

JONES Williams FW07 1'44"17	**LAFFITE** Ligier JS 11/15 1'44"44
PIRONI Ligier JS 11/15 1'44"64	**PIQUET** Brabham Ford BT 49 1'45"02
DE ANGELIS Lotus 81 1'45"46	**ANDRETTI** Lotus 81 1'45"78
PATRESE Arrows A3 1'46"01	**VILLENEUVE** Ferrari 312 T5 1'46"07
JABOUILLE Renault RE 20 1'46"15	**REUTEMANN** Williams FW 07 1'46"19
SCHECKTER Ferrari 312 T5 1'46"28	**PROST** McLaren M29B 1'46"75
ROSBERG Skol F7 1'46"97	**MASS** Arrows A3 1'47"05
REGAZZONI Ensign MN 180 1'47"18	**ZUNINO** Brabham Ford BT 49 1'47"41
WATSON McLaren M29B 1'47"70	**JARIER** Tyrell 009 1'47"83
ARNOUX Renault RE 20 1'48"24	**GIACOMELLI** Alfa Roméo 179 1'48"44
SURER ATS D4 1'48"86	**DALY** Tyrrell 009 1'48"95
DEPAILLER Alfa Roméo 179 1'49"20	**FITTIPALDI** Skol F7 1'49"42

Non-qualified :
Kennedy (Shadow DN11) 1'50"25. Johansson (Shadow DN11) 1'51"57. Lammers (ATS D4) 1'51"59. Cheever (Osella FA80) 1'54"12.

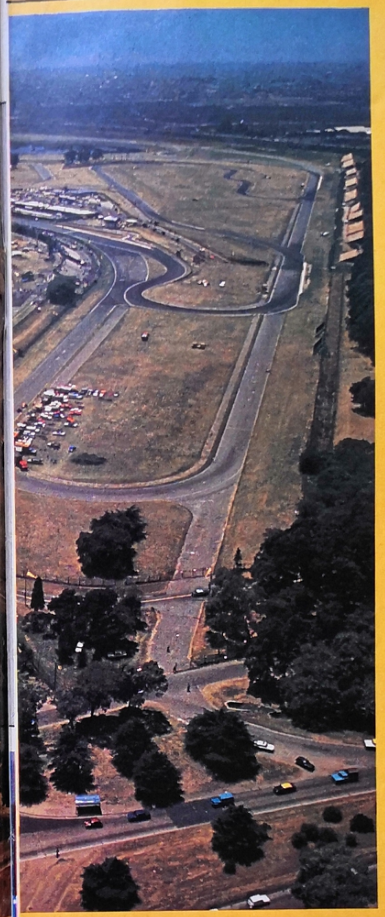


TIMES IN UNOFFICIAL PRACTICE

	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
JONES	1'45"81	1'42"89	1'44"01	1'50"70
LAFFITE	1'45"56	1'43"05	1'44"84	
PIRONI	1'45"91	1'42"77	1'45"30	1'48"37
PIQUET	1'49"39	1'45"05	1'45"30	1'50"77
DE ANGELIS	1'49"59	1'46"53	1'46"81	1'52"11
ANDRETTI	1'50"19	1'44"57	1'46"75	
PATRESE	1'48"30	1'47"27	1'44"75	1'49"99
VILLENEUVE	1'48"69	1'45"26	1'45"98	1'58"27
JABOUILLE	1'49"75	1'45"61	1'48"42	1'53"30
REUTEMANN	1'48"15		1'46"90	1'49"53
SCHECKTER	1'49"43	1'46"01	1'46"92	
PROST	1'48"23	1'47"53	1'45"78	1'51"99
ROSBERG		1'47"36	1'48"66	
MASS		1'46"92	1'44"84	1'52"28
REGAZZONI		1'47"68	1'48"10	1'54"72
ZUNINO	1'50"90	1'46"32	1'46"87	1'52"95
WATSON	1'49"69	1'46"35	1'46"45	1'52"28
JARIER	1'50"93	1'47"33	1'48"94	1'51"00
ARNOUX	1'48"64	1'49"14	1'48"40	1'54"86
GIACOMELLI	1'48"51	1'46"13	1'46"90	1'51"44
SURER		1'48"23	1'48"72	1'54"47
DALY	1'51"55	1'47"55	1'46"14	1'52"89
DEPAILLER	1'51"39	1'48"69	1'47"98	1'55"90
FITTIPALDI	1'52"50	1'48"69	1'47"41	1'52"92
KENNEDY	1'57"15	1'52"52	1'50"08	1'56"18
JOHANSSON	1'59"64		1'50"97	
LAMMERS	1'53"20		1'58"78	
CHEEVER	1'56"73	1'53"59	1'52"55	

OFFICIAL PRACTICE

	1st session	2cnd session
JONES	1'44"17	1'44"83
LAFFITE	1'44"44	
PIRONI	1'44"64	1'46"15
PIQUET	1'46"04	1'45"02
DE ANGELIS	1'47"30	1'45"46
ANDRETTI	1'45"78	1'47"94
PATRESE	1'46"01	1'48"03
VILLENEUVE	1'46"35	1'46"07
JABOUILLE	1'46"15	1'47"16
REUTEMANN	1'46"19	1'46"36
SCHECKTER	1'47"06	1'46"28
PROST	1'46"75	1'46"81
ROSBERG	1'46"97	1'47"22
MASS	1'47"85	1'47"05
REGAZZONI	1'47"18	1'50"97
ZUNINO	1'47"51	1'47"41
WATSON	1'47"70	1'48"06
JARIER	1'47"83	1'48"08
ARNOUX	1'49"42	1'48"24
GIACOMELLI	1'48"44	1'50"78
SURER	1'49"50	1'48"86
DALY	1'48"95	1'49"23
DEPAILLER	1'49"39	1'49"20
FITTIPALDI	1'49"42	1'49"56
KENNEDY	1'53"45	1'50"25
JOHANSSON	1'55"15	1'51"57
LAMMERS	1'52"16	1'51"59
CHEEVER	1'54"12	2'04"62



THEIR FASTEST RACE LAPS

	TIME	LAP
Jones	1'50"45	5e
Laffite	1'51"38	5e
Pironi	1'59"53	1er
Piquet	1'51"59	5e
De Angelis	1'53"05	6e
Andretti	1'55"79	2e
Patrese	1'52"76	2e
Villeneuve	1'52"15	5e
Jabouille	2'31"57	2e
Reutmann	1'51"69	5e
Scheckter	1'52"06	6e
Prost	1'54"13	5e
Rosberg	1'52"30	4e
Mass	1'52"10	4e
Regazzoni	1'55"46	7e
Zunino	1'56"12	2e
Watson	1'54"06	4e
Jarier	2'41"18	1er
Arnoux	1'57"49	2e
Giacomelli	1'55"04	9e
Surer	1'55"384	e
Daly	1'54"01	6e
Depailler	1'55"90	6e
Fittipaldi	1'55"27	6e

PIT STOPS AND RETIREMENTS

Jarier : retired lst lap, both driveshafts broken
Regazzoni : stops on 2cnd lap, secure left side pod, and on 31st and 33rd laps, accelerator
Surer : stopped on 2cnd lap, retired on 26th lap, brake pipe, small fire.
Pironi : retired 2cnd lap, engins blew
Jabouille : retired 3rd lap, clutch
Arnoux : retired 4th lap, right front suspension mount broken
Andretti : stopped 5th lap, retired 20th lap, engine
Watson : retired 6th lap, gearbox oil leak
De Angelis : retired 7th lap, deranged rear suspension
Mass : stopped 7th lap, changed front nose fin, retired 21st lap, gearbox
Fittipaldi : stops on 10th, 13th and 29th laps electrice
Reutemann : stopped 11th lap, retired 13th lap, engine
Jones : stopped 17th lap, overheating
Patrese : retired 28th lap, engine
Laffitte : retired 31st lap, engine
Villeneuve : retired 37th lap, front left suspension broke causing accident
Scheckter : retired 45th lap, engine
Rosberg : stopped 47th lap, electrics
Depailler : retired 47th lap, oil leak

PROVISIONAL WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP CLASSIFICATION

(After the Argentine Grand Prix)
1. Jones 9 pts - 2. Piquet 6 pts - 3. Rosberg 4 pts - 4. Daly 3 pts - 5. Giacomelli 2 pts - 6. Prost 1 pt.

CONSTRUCTORS'CUP

1. Williams 9 pts - 2. Brabham 6 pts - 3. Fittipaldi 4 pts - 4. Tyrrell 3 pts - 5. Alfa Roméo 2 pts - 6. Mc Laren 1 pt.

Results

		53 laps in 1 hr
1. Jones	Williams FW07	1 h 43'24"38, 113.986 mph
2. Piquet	Brabham BT49	24"59 behind
3. Rosberg	Skol F7	1'18"64 behind
4. Daly	Tyrrell 009	1'23"48 behind
5. Giacomelli	Alfa Roméo 179	one lap behind
6. Prost	Mc Laren M29B	one lap behind
7. Zunino	Brabham BT49	two laps behind

Fastest lap : Jones en 1'50"45 (Moyenne 194,527 km/h), **Record :** Laffite (1979) Ligier en 1'46"91.

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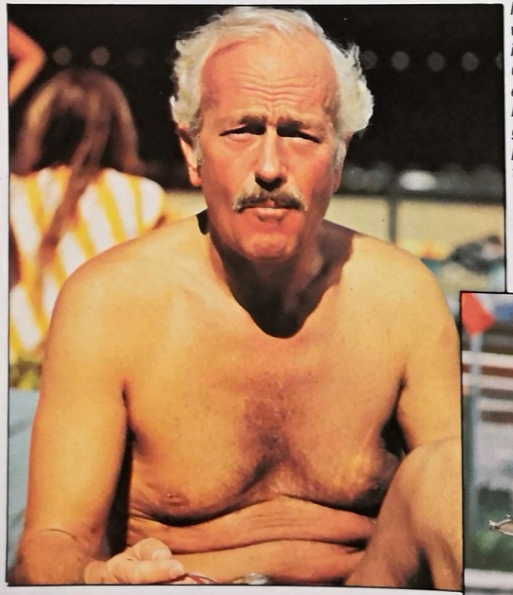
Postcard from Buenos Aires

Yet another gorgeous Argentine girl.

Essex certainly get their name about. The Lotus team's principal sponsor from Monaco also provide some welcome shade.



No black cap nor white shirt, but it's certainly him, Colin Chapman, even if he isn't his traditional garb. He looks pretty healthy too.

Michèle Dubosc is the timekeeper for Ligier, and when she's working at her stopwatches and chronometers, she's as serious as the Pope.

PHOTOS FROM THE ARGENTINE GRAND PRIX

1 - A fine debut for Pironi in the Ligier team, although his retirement was rather premature.

2 - An encouraging if unexpected third place for Rosberg's Skol.

3 - Alan Jones... and the rest.

4 - First view of the first Grand Prix.

5 - Giacomelli scored his first World Championship points.

6 - A fine second place for Nelson Piquet.

7 - The new Ensign showed promise, but it's still too new.

8 - De Angelis looked good in practice.

9 - Scheckter's Ferrari slides as though it's on ice.

10 - Daly laps Zunino on his way to a superb fourth place.

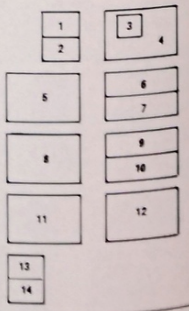
11 - Prost scored a point in his first Grand Prix.

12 - The Grand Prix, lap by lap.

13 - Two novelties in Argentina : the Osella A1 and the Arrows A3.

14 - Neither of the Shadows (this one is Kennedy's) qualified.

POSTER : Jones, first winner of the season, and a return to form for Lotus (overleaf).



Marlboro
SCAIN
23
Marlboro
GOODYEAR

parmalat
parmalat
parmalat
GOODYEAR
14
UNIPART
CLAY REGAZZONI

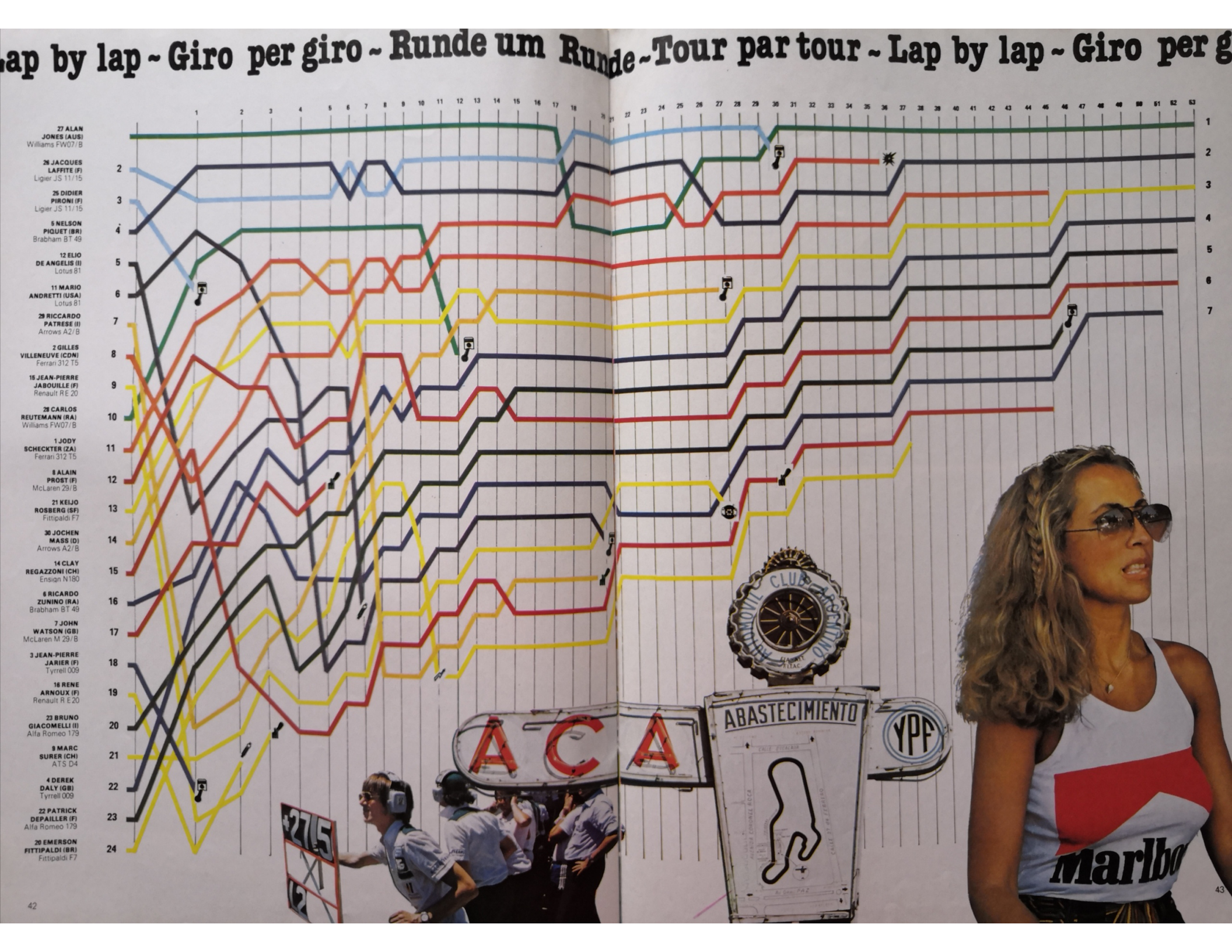
ESSEX
GOODYEAR

MICHELIN MICH
LONGINES
Agip
4
DALY
ELECTRO DOMESTICOS
Candy
GOODYEAR
parmala

Marlboro
Castrol
Marlboro
8
GOODYEAR

ap by lap - Giro per giro - Runde um Runde - Tour par tour - Lap by lap - Giro per g

27 ALAN JONES (AUS) Williams FW07/B
26 JACQUES LAFFITE (F) Ligier JS 11/15
25 DIDIER PIRONI (F) Ligier JS 11/15
5 NELSON PIQUET (BR) Brabham BT 49
12 ELIO DE ANGELIS (I) Lotus 81
11 MARIO ANDRETTI (USA) Lotus 81
29 RICCARDO PATRESE (I) Arrows A2/B
2 GILLES VILLENEUVE (CDN) Ferrari 312 T5
15 JEAN-PIERRE JABOUILLE (F) Renault RE 20
28 CARLOS REUTEMANN (RA) Williams FW07/B
1 JODY SCHECKTER (ZA) Ferrari 312 T5
8 ALAIN PROST (F) McLaren 29/B
21 KEIJO ROSBERG (SF) Fittipaldi F7
30 JOCHEN MASS (D) Arrows A2/B
14 CLAY REGAZZONI (CH) Ensign N180
6 RICARDO ZUNINO (RA) Brabham BT 49
7 JOHN WATSON (GB) McLaren M 29/B
3 JEAN-PIERRE JARIER (F) Tyrrell 009
16 RENE ARNOUX (F) Renault R E 20
23 BRUNO GIACOMELLI (I) Alfa Romeo 179
9 MARC SURER (CH) ATS D4
4 DEREK DALY (GB) Tyrrell 009
22 PATRICK DEPAILLER (F) Alfa Romeo 179
20 EMERSON FITTIPALDI (BR) Fittipaldi F7



Postcard from Buenos Aires

The « Jeanne D'Arc » is the French navy's most prestigious boat, and it happened to call in at Buenos Aires. There Jean Sage, Marie-Claude Beaumont, René and Nelly Arnoux, and Gérard Larrousse were welcomed on board.

One thing without is

Miss YPF won't go petrol

Mimicha Reutemann and Maria-Helena Fittipaldi.

The two Ferrari 312 T-Kart of Mashpro (left) and Chaudin (right) unfortunately failed to qualify.

Going back in time with the parade of historic cars. But the main historical monument in Argentine's motoring world is that living legend Juan Manuel Fangio.

To look at the flags and majorettes, one would never believe that there is political tension in the World.

BUENOS AIRES EXTRA

LIGIER : HAS THE MEDICINE WORKED ?

When commenting on the 1979 season, World Champion Jody Scheckter said ***« the Ligier team could have won the championship as easily as Ferrari. »*** It's fairly generally considered, among the cogniscenti, that the Ligier team made a nomber of mistakes last year. On one hand, these mistakes were tactical, particularly at the start of the season, and on the other hand, there were technical mistakes, which resulted in a lean period in mid-season, for the Ligier JS 11s. But experience is rarely negative and in the light of 1979 events, one might expect Ligier to have taken a great step towards maturity to the extent whereby they're no longer simply disputing the championship, but are actually winning it. So the point about a mistake is that one should never make it again.

However, the Argentine Grand Prix virtually mirrored the Ligier team's 1979 season. It wasn't simply that the Ligier JS 11/15 was the best of single-seaters at the first race of the season, for the Williams was quite obviously better. It was more complete than that. They showed lots of promise early in practice, as they did at the beginning of last season. But then they made their mistakes, and left Buenos Aires with nothing, as the World Championship escaped them last year.

The first mistake was made on Saturday evening. Laffite had set second quickest time the day before, despite a broken exhaust, and the team had then changed his engine. But on Saturday, throughout both practice sessions, this engine refused to work properly, and Jacques didn't even do a single lap. Gerard Ducarouge's mistake was that he didn't then order his mechanics to change the faulty engine for race day. He reckoned that the fault was in the electrics, so he ordered the electrics to be changed on Saturday night. That was duly done, but come Sunday, the engine still didn't sound right during the warm-up session. By this time, there were only two hours to the start. And only then did Ducarouge decide to have the engine changed for the race.

Then came other, smaller, errors. Jacques wanted to try a few laps in the spare car. But the pedals and driving position were still adjusted for Didier Pironi, the number two driver, no doubt because he was the last to use it during the off-season. The spare, of course, was also the older JS 11 as opposed to the rejuvenated JS 11/15, and the team had virtually ignored it during practice.

By the time Jacques had been fitted into the car, the lights at the end of the pit road had turned to red, signalling the end of the session.

Now with an hour and a half to go before the start of the race, the situation was as follows. Thanks to a late engine change on his race car, Jacques Laffite, second fastest driver in practice, and main challenger to Alan Jones, could well have to start in the team's spare car, which hadn't even covered a lap of the track. That would be the case if the engine change wasn't completed in time for the start. If, however, the engine change was completed in time, Jacques would still have to start the race in a car that he had neither driven nor adjusted to driving on full tanks. The latter task is usually carried out on the Saturday or the Sunday morning, two sessions which Jacques had spent in the pits.

The Ligier mechanics did well to change the engine in time for the race, although they only had a couple of minutes to spare. Jacques completed his side of the bargain by driving tremendously, demonstrating that he and the car could get on well together. Two laps before he retired, Laffite was leading.

What we've written here may seem somewhat severe on the Ligier team. After all, let's consider the facts. Ligier's two cars were among the first three in practice, and the reasons for their retirements, broken engines, was not something that Gerard Ducarouge could do much about at the circuit. But all the same, under normal circumstances, with reliable engines, the mistakes made could have jeopardised a good result, even victory, and the team has the human, technical and even financial means to avoid that situation.

HOLIDAY ON ICE

As all the cars returned to their pits after the second qualifying session on Saturday afternoon, Bernie Ecclestone was to be found hurrying towards Carlos Reutemann. Even before the Argentine had taken his helmet off, Bernie was talking to him. It was hot, half past two in the afternoon. The Grand Prix would nearly be over in 24 hours time. Bernie wanted to know what the track was like. ***« We'll have to examine the circuit carefully »*** said Carlos. ***« The new surface is just pealing off. I've never seen a track as slippery. »***

The twisty infield section of the circuit had been resurfaced two weeks before the race, but it looked like soft toffee even before the Formula One cars had taken to the track. And then, for three days, the enormous tyres of Formula One cars churned up lumps of tarmac, until there were deep ruts in every corner, almost as the snow is rutted in a skiers' slalom.

Gravel was scattered all over the track. ***« Its like ice »,*** said René Arnoux ***« It's a bit like driving a Formula One with slicks on a special stage of the Monte Carlo rally. »*** Carlos Reutemann added his thoughts on the matter : ***« If you drive just ten centimeters off the line, you find yourself on the gravel with very little grip. The car just does what it wants to, it's completely uncontrollable and doesn't seem to want to get grip again, until presumably one is on the grass. »*** William's chief engineer Patrick Head, considered the following idea : ***« if the cars didn't have skirts, the drivers might be quite tempted to take the corners on the grass. Then Formula One will really have developed into autocrossing. »***

Whether it wanted to or not, Formula One was gravitating towards autocross during practice. During the final session of practice, those watching on the twisting infield section were treated to a Holiday on Ice which bordered on the ridiculous. We were standing near a double left and were able to watch a variety of pirouettes, often in slow motion, by the following drivers : Pironi, Giacomelli, Fittipaldi, Arnoux, Cheever, Patrese, Andretti, Regazzoni, Surer, Zunino, De Angelis, Lammers, Jones and Daly. This isn't a complete list however, because we couldn't look everywhere at once.

Could the Grand Prix take place normally in such conditions ? ***« I'd prefer to drive here on this lousy surface than at Interlagos »,*** said Jabouille. Scheckter was of the same opinion : ***« At Interlagos we're risking our lives. Here, only the cars are at risk, little else. »*** But that was Laffite's reasoning for hoping that the race would be cancelled. ***« It's ridiculous, it's not worth it. The race is going te be a lottery, and we're all going to break cars. At their price, it would be better to get out now and pay our return air fares ourselves if the organisers don't want to pay them. »*** But this wasn't everyone's view. Villeneuve, for instance, was enjoying himself on this skating rink, and was getting down to driving with care. ***« There's a little more grip than when we have to drive on slicks in the wet. We have to do that on occasions. It's obviously harder to drive, but we just have to avoid making mistakes ».*** Jody Scheckter told the following story, which perhaps sums up the state of the track : ***« Alan Jones told me he saw a rabbit crossing the track in front of him. The rabbit spun on the gravel before falling flat on its face .»***

A meeting was arranged for Saturday afternoon. The organisers met constructors' representatives and some of the drivers. All the possibilities were considered, even the most hare-brained : run the Grand Prix early in the morning, or late at night, divide it into two halves and sweep the track in between, reduce the distance by half, etc.

Finally the decision was taken to run the race at the normal time and over the normal distance. However, the clerk of the course would watch the race from the control tower overlooking the track with a number of advisers in case things got really bad. One of the advisers was to be Jackie Stewart, who had been watching practice from around the track. His verdict on the circuit was ***« not nice, but not dangerous »*** and the race went ahead.

PATRES : THE LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL

Friday afternoon : Patrese is seventh fastest. Saturday morning : Patrese is second fastest. Sunday morning : Patrese is fourth fastest. Quite obviously the Arrows A3 is a good car, well balanced and very quick in a straight line. Furthermore, Patrese admitted that he was not entirely happy with the driving position. He found it tiring because it was too vertical.

It's a relief for Jackie Oliver's team. For Riccardo Patrese and Jochen Mass, it's the light at the end for the tunnel, the end of a long wait. Frank Williams hasn't been taken in though, for he told us on Sunday evening in Buenos Aires : ***« you must look out for the Arrows in the World Championship. Riccardo is a very very good driver, and Alan Rees, the team manager, is very intelligent and very experienced ».***

Should one ask Riccardo if his determination has taken a knock following the disappointing 1979 season, he instantly replies : ***« my determination has always been the same. The proof of that is my race at Montreal in 1978 a week after being banned at Watkins Glen ».*** But Riccardo nevertheless is only telling some of the story, because his determination did take a knock after the Monza drama for which some tried to hold him responsible. He was so sickened by the injustice of it all that he was very close to giving it all up and going back to studying political science at university.

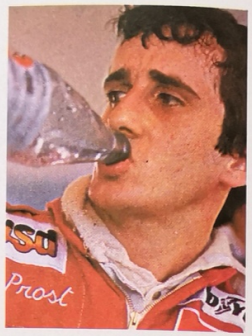
But he continued. He was no doubt disappointed with the Arrows A2, but he could only hope that the A3 would be better.

When the car arrived at Buenos Aires, it had scarcely turned a wheel, apart from a brief session at Snetterton in typically cold and windy conditions. Very little information was gained during this practice session. So the Argentine Grand Prix was the first time the car turned a wheel in anger.

Patrese qualified well despite various problems during practice, but saw his chances evaporate on the first lap when Villeneuve and De Angelis tangled. Riccardo's comments on what happened next are worth recording : ***« a lot of things went through my head. In front of me, the track was full of cars going sideways. I thought : first, this is where I crashed with Piquet last year ; second, I'll probably get accused of causing it if I get involved ; third, there are going to be so few cars at the finish that I can afford to lose a little time. So, take to the escape road. All that in a tenth of a second. And I took the escape road ».***

Riccardo obviously thinks when he's racing, and that's one attribute. It's unfortunate that he's scarcely been in a position before for us to notice. But all that's going to change : the Argentine Grand Prix proved that the Italian now has a car that is capable of allowing him to show his talent.

Jochen Mass has often shown that he's the equal of his number one driver, and he too could be up front again. He showed some his old flair at Buenos Aires, but sadly, only for seven laps.



TEDDY MAYER THE BABY SITTER

Short, the face of a practical joker, hair shorn : 24-year-old Alain Prost, the current European Formula Three champion sometimes seems more like a lively yet naughty kid has strayed into a smart dinner party by accident. But Prost has fitted into Formula One with remarkable ease.

Teddy Mayer has obviously taken to him. In Buenos Aires, Mayer was obviously very enthusiastic, rushing up to him every time he stopped in the pits, doing everything the young Frenchman wanted, and giving him advice in a manner that mixed paternalism with administration.

The reason was that Prost has really adapted well to Formula One. He showed it in Argentina as he had during testing at Circuit Paul Ricard. His setting up talents match his pure and simple quality. Mayer seems to know that he's employed a driver who has a great future ahead of him.

Prost was fifth quickest on the Thursday, but slipped back a bit during the rest of the sessions, ending up twelfth on the grid. He started well and was in eighth place behind Rosberg when he spun. On regaining the track, the skirts were jammed up, which caused him to slow by about 6'' a lap. His main aim from then on was to finish his first Grand Prix and he succeeded, not only in finishing, but also in scoring his first World Championship point, thanks to the retirements in front of him.

Initially, he was very happy with the result, but then felt considerable remorse : ***« I'm a little disappointed »,*** he admitted to us. ***« If I hadn't spun, I would have finished third or at least fourth ».*** Disappointed to be sixth-he's got cheek too !

NELSON PIQUET COMES OF AGE

He's not exactly a chatterbox, Nelson Piquet, and he's protected almost better than the Shah of Iran himself. However, with a little luck, one can throw off the protectors and get a few words out of him. ***« The BT 49 isn't a lot different to the BT 48 when it comes to driving the car »,*** he deigns to reply. ***« The difference is in the Cosworth engine which consumes less petrol than the Alfa Romeo. That means that car is lighter at the start, and easier to drive and furthermore, it means the tyres don't go off so quickly ».***

The loss of Niki Lauda from the Brabham team seems to have been adequately compensated by Nelson Piquet who improved tremendously last year. Furthermore, Gordon Murray's BT 49 was also quick from the start. That was in North America of course. Piquet suddenly became number one driver in the Brabham team and deserved third place in Canada, followed by pole position at Watkins Glen, a circuit that is considered a driver's circuit. The off season has passed, and Piquet has confirmed last year's promise by running with the best in Buenos Aires.

« We've improved the car over the winter », explained Gordon Murray. ***« It was still very new in North America, we didn't really know it that well. Since then, we've been developing it, and will continue to do so ».*** In fact Brabham hope to field a BT 49B in South Africa which will have a considerably redesigned rear end. The gearbox will be enclosed, and it will use a Wisemann gearbox, the combination intended to improve the aerodynamics considerably.

Nelson set fourth fastet time during practice, in spite of going off the track and oversteer in slow corners during the early sessions. During the race, Nelson was very careful, driving wisely but competitively. He was dicing with Laffite and Villeneuve, but when these two disappeared, he was left with second place, his first really good result. Until then, his best had been at Zandvoort last year when he came fourth.

Both Brabhams finished and it seems that they found reliability at the same time as finding simplicity. Nelson Piquet seems to be heading for a good season.

THE FERRARI 312 T5 : A REAL WING-CAR ?

Last year's World Championship was of course won by Ferrari, in spite of the Williams FW07 domination, the latter undoubtedly the best wing-car of the season. But because of this fact, there is perhaps a tendency to minimise the Scuderia's feat. Some consider that they won only because the revised Williams didn't show true form until well into the season. Mauro Forghieri, however, is conscious of these views. He and his team have therefore set out to produce the best wing-car in the new T5 with which to beat Williams and win the World Championship in 1980.

by Giorgio PIOLA

The Ferrari 312 T5 is certainly a considerably improvement on the T4, especially when it comes to ground effect. But then the other teams haven't let the grass grow under their feet either. They've also progressed, perhaps even further than Ferrari. Will the Italian team still be a force to be reckoned with in 1980 ? The reply to this question will be one that is sought after during the early stages to the season.

The T5 was first announced last November, and constitutes an aerodynamic development of the T4. Ferrari's chief engineer, Mauro Forghieri, spent a lot of time at the Pininfarina studio with Fioravanti in search of improved ground effect for the Maranello car. In order to improve the ground effect, they concentrated on the internal air flow through the car, in order to reduce its resistance and improve the air flow beneath the car.

Similarly, for this reason the air ducts carrying hot air from the water and oil radiators were modified. Hot air is divided into two flows, one of which is channelled to the rear of the car.

The chassis has also been modified in order to improve ground effect. Of the T4 monocoque, only the rear part remains, and then only to the height of the driver's seat. The front part has been completely redesigned. It's been reduced in width by eight centimeters. It's also higher and is designed so that in case of accident, the steering column won't damage the driver's legs.

The front suspension has been designed in order to reduce turbulence in front of the side pods. Consequently, the shock absorbers, witch are vertically mounted, have had to be positioned 15 cms further back, which means that the rocker arms are slanted in relation to the monocoque. Furthermore, the steering rack is now mounted at the top of the chassis.

The cars that ran at Argentina were fitted with the same exhaust systems as fitted to the T4 at the end of last season. This systems allows for bigger and higher side pods. One « three-into-one » pipe runs beside the gearbox, a vacant area as the brakes are now mounted outboard. The other exhaust pipe passes above the gearbox.

The Ferrari team are expected to test in Brazil with a new engine which is four centimeters narrower, while at Fiorano, the team will be trying out an electronic fuel system.

Generally speaking, the T5 has narrower bodywork and is flatter in front than before. The rear part is higher, and includes a small new central flap which is intended to improve air flow to the rear wing.

Finally, note that the brakes are now outboard. This was experimental on the T4 when tried at Monza, Imola and Canada□

Central flap on the engine cover in order to improve air flow towards the rear wing.

Exhausts run over the engine and beside the gearbox. The brakes are now outboard, the side pods are consequently bigger.

The front portion of the monocoque has been entirely remodelled : it's eight centimeters smaller. The shock absorbers have been mounted 5 centimeters further back (hence the slanting rocker arms) in order to ease air flow into the side pods.

DEPAILLER'S COME-BACK

For once, the last row of the grid held some interest. That's where Depailler could be found, the Depailler who had got there through sheer willpower, willpower that had been driving him there for the last six months. The man from Clermont Ferrand certainly hadn't recovered full use of his damaged limbs, at least, not yet. But the progress he's made during the past few weeks, and the progress he'll continue to make leads one to suppose that he'll be fully fit quite soon. But Patrick had overcome one obstacle, perhaps the most painful. He was once again Patrick Depailler, racing driver.

par Eric BHAT

Depailler's first contact with his Alfa-Romeo 179. He immediately got down to sorting out the car, while breaking himself in.

HIS face was a blank mask. Patrick is normally voluble, but this time he seemed as though he didn't want to let himself go. He smiled occasionally at various remarks, but he didn't really blossom forth. His face remained shadowed by a worried look, as though he was thinking of something else. Tomorrow, Sunday, he would start from the back row of the grid, perhaps thinking of the nice clear track he'd had in front of him just one year beforre. At that time, he'd been on the front row of the grid when the light turned green alongside Ligier teammate Laffite.

No, Patrick wasn't thinking back to 1979. He was far to preoccupied by this race. He had to think of this one, and try to save his carrer. Such a thought had occupied his mind for quite a few months, certainly the last few weeks.

« I'm really driving slowly, » he admitted. *« I'm not braking late, my judgement is still no perfect. My legs are still incapable of obeying my head, so I can't throw myself into corners. My head can go a lot quicker than my legs, and they're restricting me somewhat. It's a violent process driving a Formula One car. You literally have to throw yourself on the brakes to do a good time ».*

It was six years ago that Patrick turned up at Buenos Aires in a comparable situation. That was in 1974. Patrick had an accident on a trials bike in September 1973 and turned up in Argentine to drive a Tyrrell hobbling along on walking sticks. Even so, he finishe sixth. *« There's no chance of that happenning this year, unless there's a big surprise. I'm not nearly so well this time. At that time I was 13th quickest. Now I'm one from the end ».* He falls silent, then corrects him-

self. *« I'm not so well today, but I have more experience ».*
But there may be some chance for him. The circuit Almirante Brown is very slippery for the race, there's very little grip, which may favour the old hands among whom Patrick may be condidered. *« That's nothing great. The circuit will be like ice for everyone »,* he reckons. *« In comparison to one of the younger drivers, I might stay out of trouble longer, but I won't necessarily avoid trouble indefinitely. It's too slippery. It's going to be the luck of the draw tomorrow ».* He still can't put out of his mind a certain lack of confidence. He refuses to be too optimistic, at least when it comes to the immediate future and the race. *« I'm much too slow »,* he repeats, *« I'm getting myself in trim ».*

THE comeback has been difficult, trying, moving. Six months earlier, Patrick was laid out on a hospital bed, his legs contorted. One month ago, he could be seen hobbling painfully with the aid of sticks. We don't want our readers to weep tears of sympathy at this description, we just want to convey what Patrick has had to do to get back into motor racing in time for the first race. He completely ignored all the Christmas and New Year festivities in order to take an intensive course at a theraputic home in the South of France.

Patrick turned up at the circuit without using sticks at all, although it was a painful process. *« Even when you haven't broken your legs, it's hard to restart even after three months. So imagine what it's like when your legs hurt like hell and you haven't driven for six months ».*

Before the first unofficial test session on Thursday, Patrick was somewhat apprehensive. *« I don't really know whether I'll be able to drive tomorrow. I could move in a funny way during the first session, or set off some terrible pain and not be able to walk at all ».* Five practice sessions followed one another, and Patrick took part in all of them. *« I could feel myself improving physically from the first to the last »,* he said. *« It wasn't very quickly, but it went well. I've learnt, or relearnt, a lot of things. That's a relief. I now know that I will recover 100 per cent, of that tere's no doubt. Before now, I wasn't sure ».*

— You're kidding ?

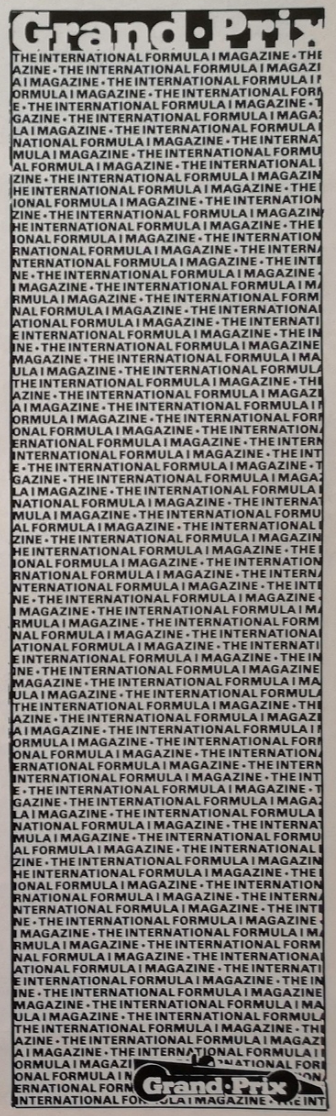
« No, really wasn't as certain as I am now. I hope I'm not kidding now. A cancer victim never reckons he's going to die. He hopes for a miracle ».

The comparison is a bad one, Patrick never reckoned that he was incurable. *« Carlo Chiti believes in me »,* he told us. *« He needs a good test driver, and he reckons I'm good at that. He's taken a chance, the chance that my legs will get better ».* But a frown puckers his brow, chassing away his normally relaxed air.

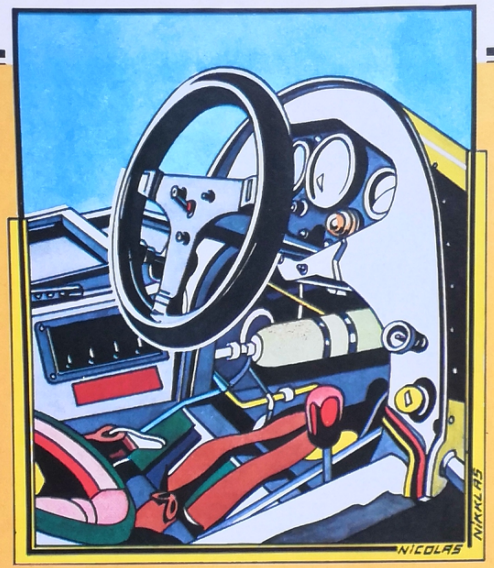
The race was Depailler's comeback, but also his trial. Nevertheless, he left Bue nos Aires reassured.

PATRICK has already been able to set up the car. He's been working with the engineer Colombo (Marreli has stayed in Italy for health reasons) and the chief mechanic Ermano Cuoghi (exLauda). Patrick worked on the problem on Friday morning, having adjusted his driving position on Thursday. *« The handling really hasn't been good. It's too nervous, understeering and oversteering in the same corner, which just won't do ».*
« There are two things that have to work on a racing car », he explained. *« The aerodynamic and mechanical elements. You can always use one element in order to mask a fault in another element. As far as I can see, that's what they've done. They've made a mistake in trying to correct a fault in one division by using the other. Yet the fault is still there ».*
So what have you been doing, Patrick ? *« I've been working on both fronts simultaneously : mechanical and aerodynamic. I've softened up the car quite considerably in terms of springs, and adjusting the aerodynamic balance. One of the main things I've done is refit the front nose fins. On the whole, I've found the car softer and more progressive this way ».*
During practice though, there was an indefinable and scarcely perceptible feeling that the Alfa-Romeo team were slightly reserved when it came to Patrick. *« That's true »,* admitted the man himself, *« they don't altogether trust me at the moment. But I think they'll soon regain confidence in me. I'm explaining what I'm doing to them, and I hope they'll be convinced ».* Patrick hasn't been upset by this reserve. *« The car isn't going very, very quickly. I would be unhappier if it was capable of running at the front. But that's no the case. Furthermore, my teammate isn't far in front of me, two rows at the most. But having said that, I must point out that the car could go faster than at the moment. It's just that I'm driving it slowly. There's a lot more setting up of the driver to do than of the car ».*

TWENTY-four hours have passed. The mask has disappeared. Patrick is smilling and relaxed. He retired four laps from the end with an oil lead, but that didn't annoy him. *« I did what I wanted to : drove, drove, drove. I wanted to see if I could last the distance, and I proved that I could, and I could, and I could also get back into the rhythm of things. I nearly lasted the whole race. My right leg is a little tired from braking, but that's no problem. I can tell you that I'm a lot happier. This morning, I didn't think I could finish the race, I didn't think I was capable of it ».*
So that was the doubt in the back of Patrick's mind the previous evening. Now it was forgotten. He may not have driven exceptionally fast, but he'd kept going. *« I've fulfilled my contract ».* He was now thinking of the future, making plans. *« Before we go to Brazil, I'm going to continue my treatment by the sea. By Interlagos, I won't be suffering at all, and by South Africa, I will have regained my punch ».* He finishes off with : *« by the end of the year, I'll be winning a Grand Prix ».* Optimism, bluff, auto-suggestion ? Depailler proved in Argentine that he doesn't deal in such statements. □



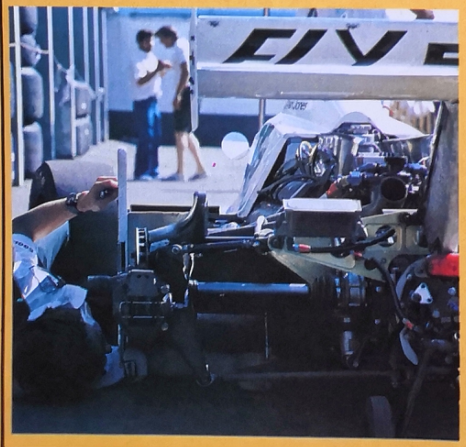
Cockpits



SAUDIA WILLIAMS

Williams-Ford FW07/06 :
Alan Jones (AUS)
Williams-Ford FW07/05 :
Carlos Reutemann (RA)
Williams-Ford FW07/04 :
spare.

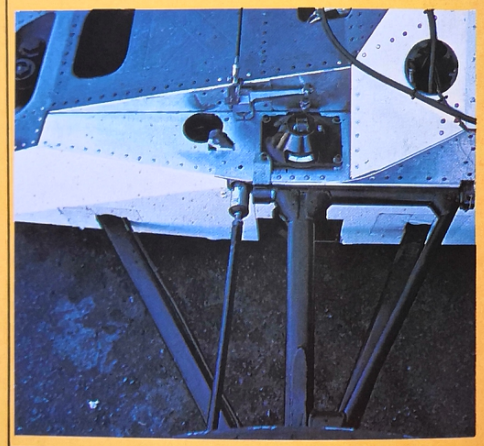
Frank Williams had brought out to Argentine two new cars for Jones and Reutemann. They were fitted with new rear suspension geometry, new side pods and bodywork enclosing the gearbox. The spare was still in last year's specification.
On the Thursday, the new cars showed that they had too much downforce and not enough speed in a straight line. For this reason, the cars appeared the next day without the enclosed gearbox. Jones set the fastest time in the spare car, and even at that stage, decided to use it for the race. Reutemann wasn't so happy. He had electrical trouble which started a fire, so he had to use Jones's car, even though it still carried Jones's number 27.
Reutemann went off the road without damaging the car badly on Saturday. He also had the front nose fins taken off, but this experiment proved inconclusive. Jones's time from the previous day assured him of pole position.
The fate of the Williams in the race is well-known. Destiny was on Alan's side for once. Reutemann's appearance was impressive if brief. It's worth noting that the Williams ran with rear wheels that were an inch narrower than the others. The idea was twofold. First of all the straightline speed was improved and it also served to aid the air flow from the side pods.



PARMALAT BRABHAM

Brabham-Ford BT 49/4 :
Nelson Piquet (BR)
Brabham-Ford BT 49/5 :
Ricardo Zunino (RA)
Brabham-Ford BT 49/2 :
spare.

Nelson Piquet and Ricardo Zunino had two new monocoques at their disposal. The spare was the same as that used in North America last year, but the new cars had revised rear suspension, new uprights, modified side pod profiles, and a new skirt system. Furthermore, both the radiator positioning and fuel system had been reviewed.
On the Friday, Piquet broke his engine during the untimed session, and had to use the spare car during the qualifying session. The Brabhams were the fastest in a straight line, but that was to the detriment of handling in the slower corners which promoted oversteer. That problem had been partially resolved by the Saturday and allowed Piquet to qualify among the fastest, as expected. However, as Nelson had gone off the road on Saturday morning, damaging the right rear suspension, he had to qualify in the spare car.
Both Brabhams made it to the finish. Piquet, as in Canada last year, was one of the main rivals to Jones and Villeneuve, and but he had to slow towards the end. Zunino was very much on his guard on the slippery track, and brought up the tail end of the field.



CANDY TYRRELL

Tyrrell-Ford 009/3 :
Jean-Pierre Jarier (F)
Tyrrell-Ford 009/4 :
Derek Daly (IRL)
Tyrrell-Ford 009/2 :
spare.

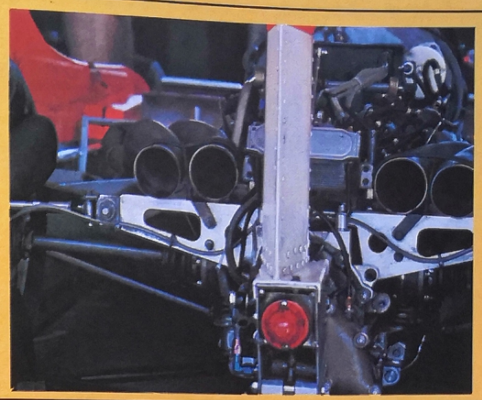
The Tyrrells were scarcely competitive at the end of last year, and so could hardly be expected to be any more so at the beginning of 1980. They were virtually unchanged apart from some side pod alterations, and were hardly capable of taking their drivers to the front of the grid during practice. Jean-Pierre Jarier was somewhat disillusioned during practice. ***« I'm really trying my hardest. With a decent car, I'd be on pole position, but as it is, I haven't got a hope ».*** The Frenchman did just one lap during the race, returning to the pits with both driveshafts broken, which somewhat surprised Ken Tyrrell. Derek Daly, the new recruit to the English team, saved the day by finishing a fine fourth despite difficulty with malfunctioning skirts.

ALFA ROMEO AUTODELTA

Alfa-Romeo 179/3 :
Patrick Depailler (F)
Alfa-Romeo 179/4 :
Bruno Giacomelli (I)
Alfa-Romeo 179/2 :
spare.

The Alfas brought to Argentina for the two drivers were completely new, and differed in a number of ways to last year's car. There was a new type of bodywork fixing, outboard brakes, new rear suspension and new uprights, which fitted further into the wheels and were so designed in order to improve air flow from the side pods.
The Alfa team spent most of their weekend trying to resolve an overheating problem which began to be cured when an extra oil radiator was fitted on the right hand side. Giacomelli frequently left the track during practice, but never with any real damage.

Depailler concentrated on getting his car to his liking, improving the ground effect, fitting softer shock absorbers, and refitting the front nose fins. Giacomelli did well to score his first World Championship points, but Depailler had the bad luck to retire within sight of the finish, following an oil leak.



LIGIER GITANES

Ligier-Ford JS 11-15/01 :
Jacques Laffite (F)
Ligier-Ford JS 11-15/04 :
Didier Pironi (F)
Ligier-Ford JS 11/02 :
spare.

The Ligier JS 11 was of course the car that was so brilliant in Buenos Aires a year ago. Since last season, it had undergone a course in rejuvenation, and as the 11-15, returned to the front of the field for the Argentine start of the 1980 season. The rear end of the French Formula One car had been considerably redesigned. On the aerodynamic side, there were new wing profiles within the side pods, and a new skirt system had been adopted. On the mecanical side, there was new suspension geometry, the main aim being to mount the shock absorbers on the gearbox in order to improve air flow. The gearbox itself was new. The Hewland FGB had been reinforced in order to improve maintenance.
Quite obviously these modifications were in the right direction, for both Laffite and new teammate Pironi showed that they were competitive enough to be among Alan Jones principal rivals. Jacques succeeded in two feats : qualifying on the front row at the same time as being restricted to a minimum of laps. This was because his engine broke on Friday, and he had electrical problems that were so bad on Saturday that he never even went out onto the circuit. Jacques' engine was still misfiring dreadfully during the Sunday morning warm-up. It was changed for the race, but then broke depriving the enthusiastic Jacques of a fine result. Didier Pironi qualified in third place and looked as though he'd finish well, yet his engine blew after only two laps.

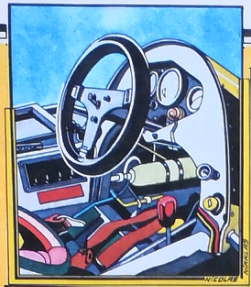
SKOL FITTIPALDI

Skol-Ford F7/1 :
Emerson Fittipaldi (BR)
Skol-Ford F7/2 :
Keke Rosberg (SF)
Skol-Ford F7/3 :
spare.

Only the chassis remains of the old Wolf WR9. The suspension had been designed by Fly Studio, whose agreement with Fittipaldi ended there. The aerodynamics had been complety restudied by Harvey Postlethwaite. The side pods were a lot stiffer. In order to lose weight, a heat exhanger had been fitted for the oil radiator. Aerodynamically, the Skol-Fittipaldi was an almost exact copy of the Williams.

The Anglo-Brasilian team had a poor debut on the Thursday : Rosberg broke his engine and Emerson went off the track. The next day, it was Emerson's turn to break the engine, so he took over the spare for the afternoon. Emerson complained of poor roadholding and the side pods were suffering deformation.
Rosberg's car was troubled with a petrol leak on Saturday, so he took over the spare and then crashed, apparently because a tyre lost its air in the hairpin before the pits. The Fittipaldi team decided against repairing the spare.
Emerson, during the race, spent 16 laps in the pits vainly trying to sort out an electrical problem. Rosberg, however, did well to finish in third place, despite an engine that was cutting out towards the end.

Cockpits

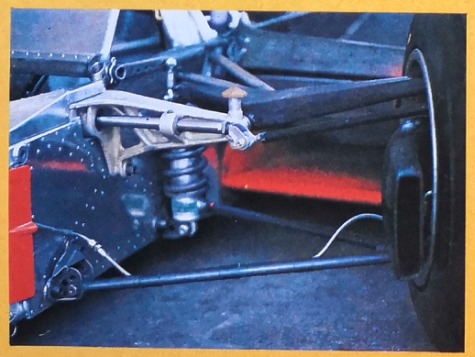


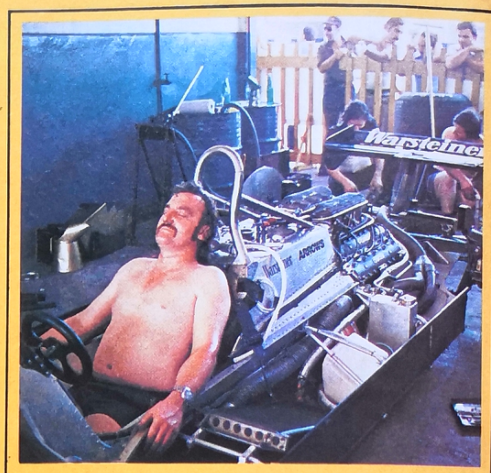
FERRARI SEFAC

Ferrari 312 T5/042 :
Jody Scheckter (ZA)
Ferrari 312 T5/043 :
Gilles Villeneuve (CDN)
Ferrari 312 T5/044 :
spare.

The Ferraris that went to Argentina were basically in the same configuration as they'd been at Circuit Paul Ricard last December. Since then, the Ferrari team had concentrated on improving the air flow from the radiators.
Their Argentine weekend start badly. During the first session, Villeneuve broke his experimental engine, and Jody only just saved his by stopping in the pits. Prior to that, the South African had been trying a new rear wing, but in the end they settled for a small non-Delta wing.

The Ferraris weren't particularly happy on the Buenos Aires circuit. It seemed that from the start the Michelin tyres didn't get much grip from the circuit, and the fact was confirmed during the following days. Furthermore, the Italian cars weren't particularly quick in a straight line. They were about 6mph slower than the fastest cars on the straight.
Villeneuve's car sprang an oil leak on Sunday morning during the warm-up, and then Scheckter's showed signs of the same problem, However, the South African's leak wasn't as severe and was harder to pinpoint. So while Gilles' engine was changed, Jody's engine remained in the car. The mechanics prepared the spare car just in case. But it seemed in vain, for both drivers started in their own race cars. Even so, the mechanics were again working Scheckter's car after the warm-up.
Villeneuve decided to start using different tyres to those of Scheckter and those on the Renaults. He went well until either the front left suspension broke or a tyre punctured, he wasn't certain which, and he ended up in the catch fencing. Scheckter's engine began to show signs of weakness and ended up by breaking altogether.





WARSTEINER ARROWS

Arrows-Ford A3/1 :
Riccardo Patrese (I)
Arrows-Ford A3/2 :
Jochen Mass (D)
Arrows-Ford A2/2 :
spare.

Without doubt, the new Arrows A3 was one of the revelations of the Argentine Grand Prix. Apart from anything else, it's one of the test built cars in the field. Beside other Formula One cars, and also its predecessor, the A2, the new A3 looks like a Formula Two car because of its smaller dimensions. In fact it has the shortest wheelbase of all the Formula One cars, and after the Ensign, it has the smallest rear track. The frontal area has also been considerably reduced which probably explains why the A3, with the Brabham, was the fastest in a straight line. Tony Southgate had this to say on the subject : *« although our new car has a smaller frontal area and therefore less aerodynamic aid, it also offers less wind resistance than our over-sophisticated A2 ».*

The Arrows A3 also featured an enclosed gearbox.
Throughout the weekend, Mass was held up by gearbox problems, which slowed him on three separate occasions. The first was on Thursday, caused by an oil leak. On Friday a selector caused him to stop, and finally, during the race, it was the gearbox that caused him to retire. Furthermore, he had the bad luck to break the engine on Saturday.
Patrese, on the other hand, had less trouble. He was able to set fifth fastest time on Friday. He was second quickest during the unofficial session on Saturday morning but then was immobilised by a broken drivershaft for the first half hour of the afternoon qualifying session. During the race, the exhaust broke first of all, then the engine, but not before Riccardo had driven well through the field following an excursion on the first lap. Mass also went off early on, but he too drove well, demonstrating the potential of his new car.

MARLBORO MCLAREN

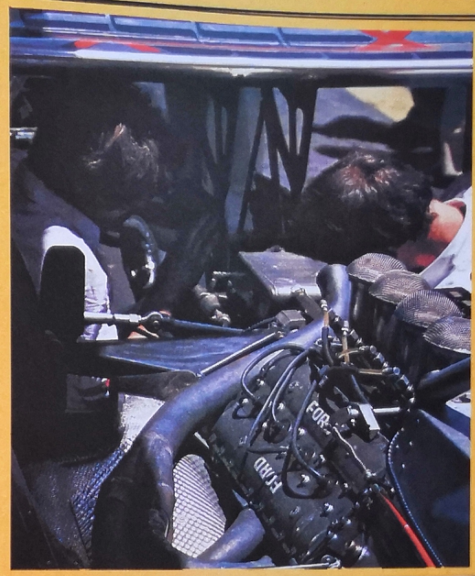
McLaren-Ford M29/2 :
John Watson (GB)
McLaren-Ford M29/1 :
Alain Prost (F)
McLaren-Ford M29/3 :
spare.

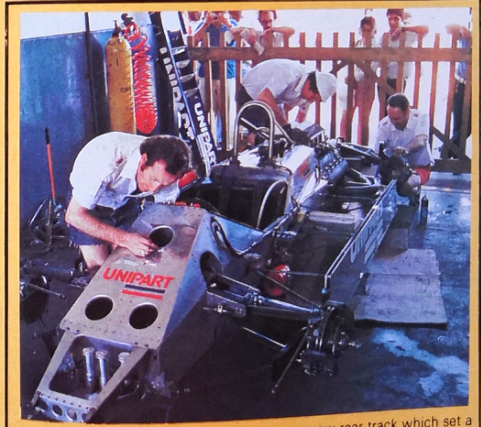
McLaren had done quite a lot to their 1979 car during the winter. It had new rear suspension, outboard brakes, new side pods and a new skirt system. The M29s were also fitted with extractors designed to syphon off hot air from the exhausts and engine. The team had abandoned the idea of a heat exchanger... heavier than a radiator. The fuel tank had been enlarged by seven centimeters in order to improve capacity, as it had been insufficient previously.
The team's biggest problem in Buenos Aires was with skirts. Watson broke two and Prost broke one. The Frenchman finished a good sixth in the race, while Watson retired prematurely without any oil in the gearbox.

ESSEX LOTUS

Lotus-Ford 81/2 :
Mario Andretti (USA)
Lotus-Ford 81/1 :
Elio De Angelis (I)
Lotus-Ford 79/5 :
spare.

There were a number of changes in the Lotus camp, first of all a changed livery thanks to the increased Essex involvement, and it seemed to do the cars good. They appeared quite competitive in Buenos Aires, a pleasant revival. Of course, there were new cars, the 81s, and new personnel too : Peter Wright and Malcolm Jones (ex-Goodyear).
Andretti and De Angelis each had an 81 but the spare remained the experimental 79 which had already been seen at Le Castellet and was left in South America following testing in December.
Elio De Angelis's first offering of the year in a practice session was a spin. He continued in the same vein the following day during unofficial practice when he broke up his car's side pods. During the afternoon, the car ran out of petrol out on the circuit. Mario Andretti had a little more luck, for his car ran out of petrol opposite the pits, but perhaps Chapman's team should take a little more care in calculating their fuel consumption. Mario had a nasty shock on Saturday when he ran out of brakers and went off the track : *« my hair turned a little grey that time »,* he joked afterwards, at the same time showing that it had frightened him a little.
Andretti needed just one lap of the warm-up realise that his engine wasn't working properly. The mechanics started to change the engine but there wasn't a lot of time, only two hours, and it wasn't finished until after the car came to rest on the grid.
Andretti started knowing that the had little hope of lasting the distance because the engine change had been too rushed. He stopped once in the pits on the fifth lap and came to rest for good on the 20th with a broken engine. De Angelis was involved in a mix-up on the first lap and retired shortly afterwards with a broken suspension mounting point.





UNIPART ENSIGN

Ensign-Ford N 180/1 :
Clay Regazzoni (CH)

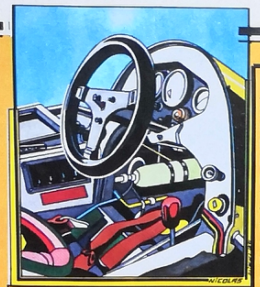
Mo Nunn had a completely new car with a completely new team to look after it. There were two engineers from the Lotus camp involved with the car : Ralph Bellamy (who'd spent some time with Fittipaldi since leaving Lotus) and Nigel Bennett. Nunn had also tempted McLaren's chief mechanic Gary Anderson, into his team, plus two mechanics from Lotus and another from Penske. The new Ensign differed from the other Williams copies thanks to a different aerodynamic aspect in front, slanted side radiators, and a very narrow rear track which set a record in Formula One.
Regazzoni immediately declared himself delighted with the handling of his car, and also its straight-line speed. However, it also suffered understeer when practice began. The Ensign was still too new when it appeared in Buenos Aires and had scarcely been tested due to fuel feed problems. The car did only a few laps on the Saturday because of a water leak from one of the hoses and trouble with the side pods.
During the race, the accelerator tended to jam wide open, which forced Clay to pit on a number of occasions, especially when he buzzed the engine to 11,500 revs two or three times. Amazingly, the engine didn't blow up...

RENAULT ELF

Renault 22 :
Jean-Pierre Jabouille (F)
Renault 21 :
René Arnoux (F)
Renault 20 :
spare.

At first glance, the Renaults would seem to have changed little since last year. But that's very misleading, for the Renaults have undergone considerable modification which has transformed them from model 10s to model 20s. The cars have been modified in a functional sense of the word, in order to use the material to its full potential. For instance, the bodywork has been modified in order to improve accessibility. The side pods have been redesigned, and the skirt system is new. A gearbox spacer has been fitted, the turbo heat exchangers were new, and the cooling system had been modified.
The Renaults scarcely started off the year well, in spite of encouraging performances in private testing. They had five seperate engine problems during practice (see seperate story for details). During the race, the two Renaults formed the rearguard to the field, but even that wasn't for long for both had disappeared by the fourth lap.

Cockpits



SHADOW

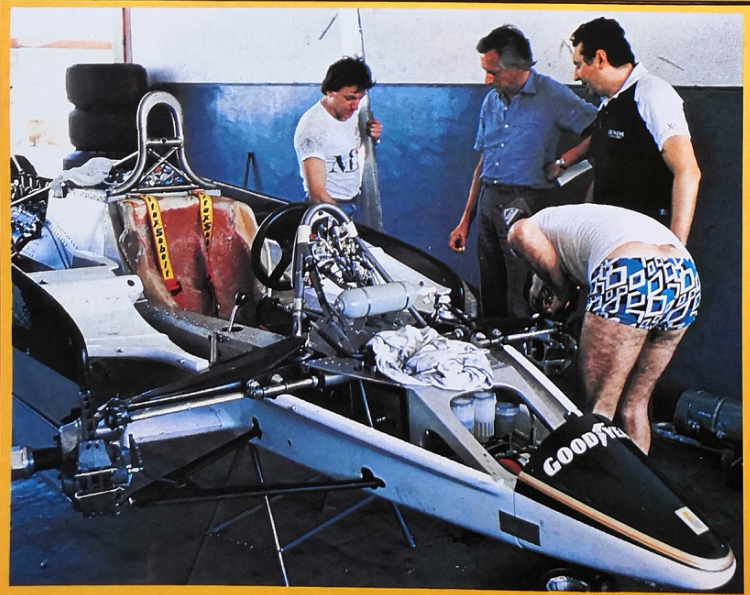
Shadow-Ford DN11/2 :
David Kennedy (IRL)
Shadow-Ford DN11/1 :
Stefan Johansson (S)
Shadow-Ford DN11/3 :
spare.

John Gentry started the design for Shadow's DN11 and Vic Morris finished it off. The result was a black car which very much resembled its older sisters. The biggest problem in the Shadow team is the lack of sponsor. Don Nicholls was absent continuing his quest for financial support. Presumably, if he doesn't find some money, he may have to withdraw his team. And his two cars' performances was scarcely encouraging in spite of the enthusastic if inexperienced efforts by drivers Kennedy and Johansson. Neither man could really have ever envisaged qualifying.

ATS WHEELS

ATS-Ford D4/2 :
Marc Surer (CH)
ATS-Ford D4/1 :
Jan Lammers (NL)
ATS-Ford D3/2 :
spare.

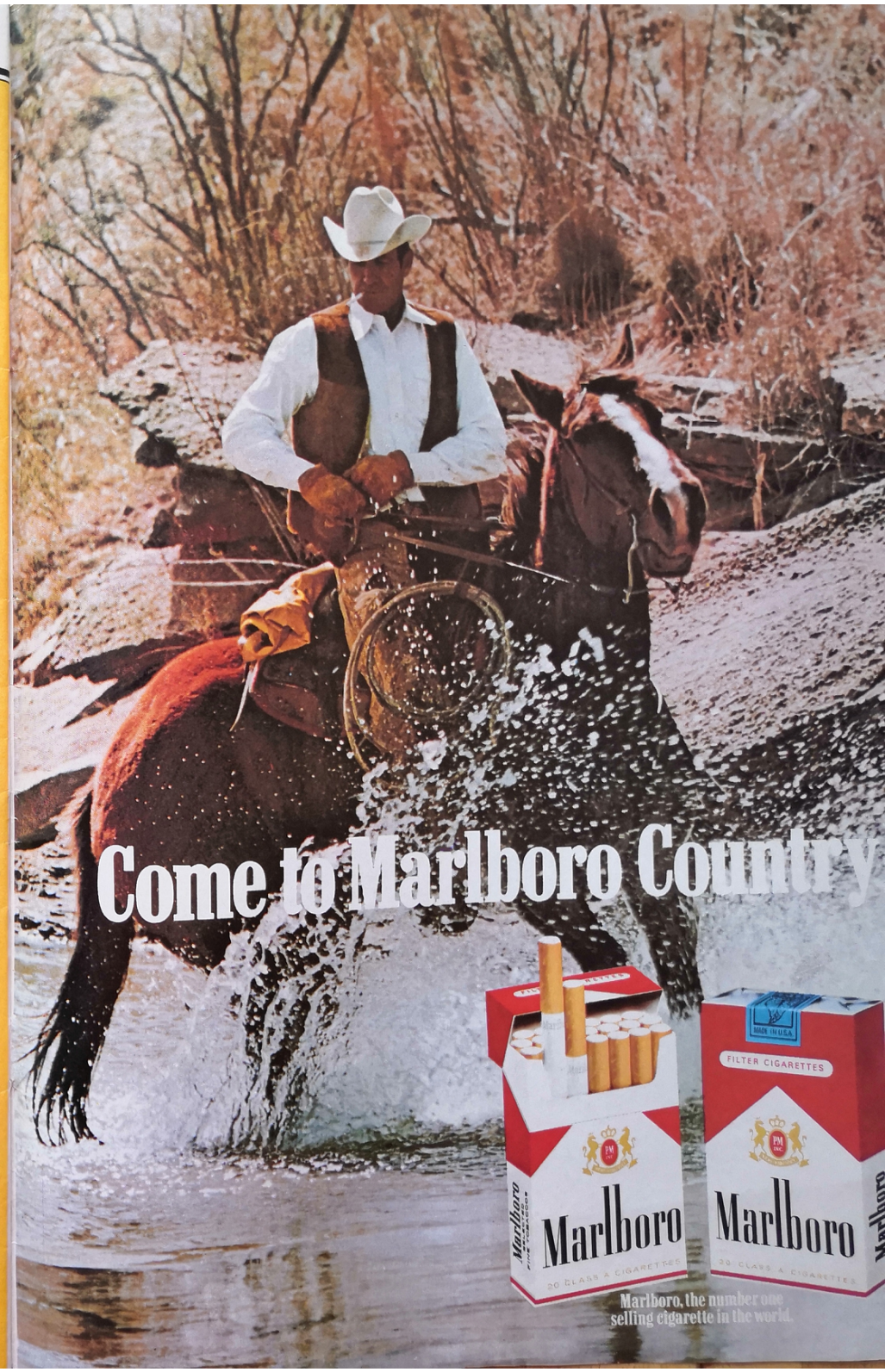
The two new drivers in the ATS team took over two new cars. The D4 differed from the D3 by new rear suspension, side pods and rear wing. Lammers's bodywork was different to that on Surer's car because of the smaller size of the Dutch driver.
Lammers broke two engines, one on Thursday and another on Friday, and never qualified. Surer, on the other hand, did get onto the grid, but a broken brake pipe caused his retirement.
The English-based German team seemed to be suffering a lack of both money and mechanics. Jo Ramirez, formerly with John Wyer, Tyrrell, Copersucar and Shadow, had become team manager following Vic Elford's strange dismissal. Nigel Stroud has also left, so the team are without a development engineer. Nevertheless, the team intends to modify the cars considerbly for South Africa by shortening the chassis by seven centimeters.



OSELLA

Osella-Ford A1/1 :
Eddie Cheever (USA)

Osella's new car made its public appearance at Buenos Aires, following private testing at Misano in Italy. Immediately noticeable was its considerable size. It is a wing-car, yet it hasn't been subjected to any wind-tunnel tests. The Osella appeared to be very heavy, although admittedly there were several parts that were very much temporary solutions. Enzo Osella and his team had to rush to get the car together for Buenos Aires. The oil radiators, for example, were mounted on the back of the car which is hardly aerodynamic.
The Osella suffered aerodynamic and heating troubles all weekend, and the straight line speed wasn't very high. On the Friday, the engine wouldn't run properly, and then Cheever went off the road. The next day, the engine broke and the Osella didn't qualify.



Nouvelles 77D8

77D8 pour Golf GTI, Opel, BMW, Fiat, Alfa Romeo, Talbot.